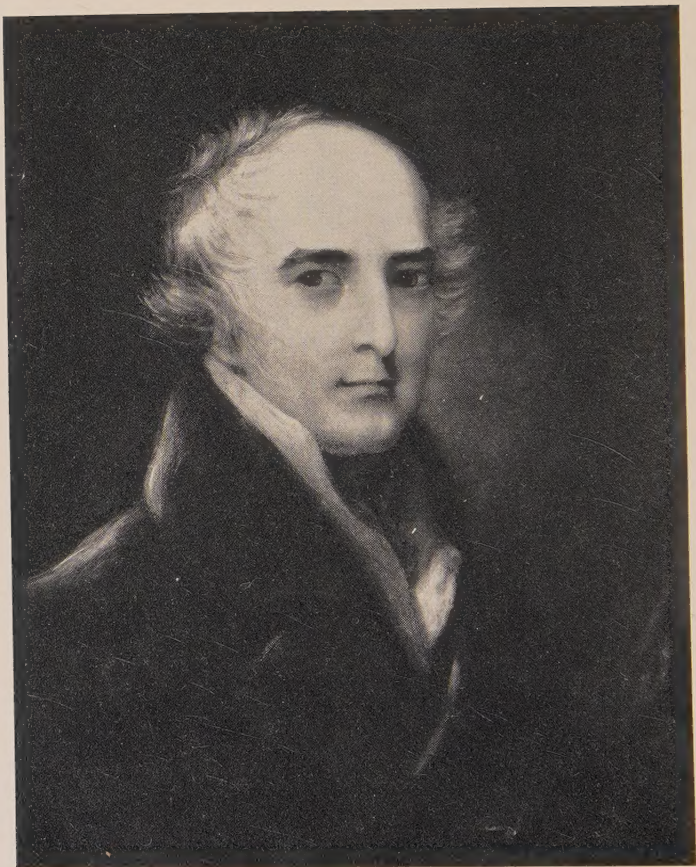


INDIA
UNDER WELLESLEY



THE MARQUESS WELLESLEY, K.G.

From a Painting by J. Pain Davis in the National Portrait Gallery

INDIA UNDER WELLESLEY

By


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PREFACE

THIS account of Lord Wellesley's Indian administration makes no claim to be exhaustive or final. A life of Lord Wellesley on a scale commensurate with his importance remains to be written, and the mass of material in the India Office and British Museum is so great that years of intensive study would be necessary for the historical student who should attempt it. It remains true, however, that a great deal of such labour would probably be unrewarded by any very valuable results. The main events of Lord Wellesley's period of office are well enough known, and nothing is likely now to emerge which would fundamentally alter our view of it. Montgomery Martin, the editor of the famous *Despatches*, did his work so well that, as I can testify from experience, it is usually but wasted labour to glean where he has reaped. A rather misleading impression is apt to be given by such a statement as that of the late Lord Curzon in his *British Government in India* that "there are said to be four hundred volumes of MSS. still lying unexplored in the British Museum." A great many of these, or at any rate duplicates of them, were obviously seen by Martin, and I have read through many volumes selected here and there only to find that he had allowed nothing of importance to escape him. I have little doubt, however, that there is still much of interest to discover, and though I cannot myself claim to have examined thoroughly even a quarter of these records, I have used certain volumes which have hitherto rather escaped notice, and I have especially looked for papers that might illustrate the relations between the Home and the Indian Government.

Pending, then, the appearance of an authoritative biography on a large scale, some excuse may yet be deemed necessary for the appearance of another short account of

Lord Wellesley's Indian administration. Several already exist, each possessing merits of its own, and I may perhaps particularly mention the admirable sketch by the present Dean of Winchester, the Very Rev. W. H. Hutton, in the *Rulers of India* series, to which I should like to acknowledge my obligations. But apart from the fact that this memoir is on a slightly larger scale than his, there is room for a diversity of verdicts on a statesman of the calibre of Lord Wellesley. It has, I think, been too generally assumed that a recognition of his greatness necessitates a sweeping condemnation of the efforts of the Court of Directors to control, or even to question, him ; and precludes any but the most perfunctory criticism of the methods by which his wonderful results were achieved. I have not been altogether able to subscribe to that view. While I rate Lord Wellesley as high as, and perhaps higher than, all these writers, I am less inclined than some to assume that his opponents deserve only censure and contempt. Wellesley seems to me to merit at once loftier praise and more reasoned criticism than he has been wont to receive from the majority of biographers and historians. He often acted in a manner that was technically unconstitutional, and though I think it was well both for the British Empire in the East and for the Indian peoples that he did so, I cannot think it reasonable to blame the Court of Directors because they could not always concur, and did not always understand. An effort has been made in these pages to explain the difficulties necessarily inherent in the triple control constituted by the Governor-General in Council in India, the Court of Directors in Leadenhall Street, and the Board of Control in Whitehall. It is fatally easy to condemn in scathing words this elaborate system of check and countercheck, but there neither was, nor could have been—especially at this time—any heaven-sent plan for the government of a vast dependency

separated from the suzerain power—to use a vivid phrase of Lord Wellesley himself—by “all this dreadful space of half the convex world.” There were no precedents to guide that generation. The problem had necessarily to be worked out by a *solvitur ambulando*, and the three bodies above mentioned were perhaps the best means then available for reconciling Indian experience with commercial interests and political control. It is not surprising that the Court of Directors lagged behind both their great Governor-General and the Presidents of the Board of Control of that time in their appreciation of imperial questions, but at least they had a point of view which has not been altogether understood, and which they ably defended.

It may perhaps be permissible to indicate where my study of the records has been most fruitful. In Chapter XIV it has enabled me to carry the history of the famous College of Fort William to a later point than is generally reached, and to describe the interesting controversy that ensued between the Court of Directors and the President of the Board of Control. In Chapter XVIII, though Castlereagh's and Arthur Wellesley's comments on the Treaty of Bassein are to be found in Martin, the criticism of John Malcolm has not, I think, before been printed. In Chapter XXIII, most of the correspondence between the Court and the Board of Control has not hitherto been published. I make no apology for giving so much of these documents in full, for I know of nothing else that illustrates so clearly the relations—hitherto veiled in a good deal of obscurity—between the Directors, the Board of Control, and the Government in India. Incidentally, these documents show that Lord Castlereagh, in his short period of office as President of the Board of Control, was already exhibiting those great qualities of reasonableness, insight, patience, urbanity, and unflinching firmness which he was after-

wards to display in a wider sphere, when working for the world-settlement after the ruin of the Napoleonic system. On some minor matter of administration the Court of Directors complained of a letter of Castlereagh as amounting to a threat. To this the President of the Board gently answered that a re-perusal of his letter would correct this impression, and added with illuminating truth that a threat "is not the mode in which my feelings or habits incline me to do business." All his subsequent diplomatic successes verify the truth of this interesting reflection on his own method.

The references in the footnotes show the authorities on which I have mainly relied. Besides the staple histories and biographies, and Martin's *Despatches* which must always remain the chief foundation for any history of Lord Wellesley's life and career, various other works have been placed under contribution. I should like especially to acknowledge my indebtedness to the Hon. Sir J. W. Fortescue's great *History of the British Army*. References will be found to contemporary works and pamphlets, to Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates* and to the *Carnatic* and *Oudh Papers* printed by order of the House of Commons, to many volumes of the *Historical Manuscripts Commission*, and to the recently published *Wellesley Papers*. Of records in the India Office I have especially used the following volumes of the *Home Miscellaneous Series*, 236, 481, 482, 486, 487, 488, and 504. Of the great collection of Wellesley records among the *Additional MSS.* in the British Museum, I have made especial use of the private and family papers, Nos. 37315, 37316, 37416, 37282, and of Nos. 13393, 13395, 13592, 37284, but many other collections have been examined.

Professor Dodwell, of London University and the School of Oriental Studies, and Sir Verney Lovett, K.C.S.I., Reader in Indian History at Oxford, have very

kindly read the proofs, and I owe them thanks for valuable suggestions and corrections.

The book has had to be written in the too few periods of leisure that fall to the lot of a hard-worked College tutor, and no one is more conscious than the author of the measure in which it falls short of what he would fain have had it be. If it only inspires some historical scholar with greater abilities and ampler leisure to embark on that authoritative biography which is long overdue, it will not have been written in vain.

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INDIA UNDER WELLESLEY

CHAPTER I

PROLOGUE

THE governor-generalship of Lord Wellesley was in respect of material additions to the East India Company's territories, in military renown and in its lasting effects upon the whole conception of empire in the East, the greatest of all British administrations in India. It was the most splendid and convincing instance in our history of a government autocratic and imperial in the best sense of the words. It was, said his friend and contemporary, Lord Brougham, "an administration which, for the truly statesmanlike capacity displayed in every portion of it,—the genius for affairs, the civil as well as the military wisdom and energy presiding over the whole,—has certainly no superior, if it have a rival, in modern history." ¹ Lord Metcalfe, no mean judge, called him "the greatest statesman that had ever been in India." ² It does not, of course, necessarily follow that Lord Wellesley is the greatest man that has represented his country in the East. Among his predecessors, most men would rank Clive and Warren Hastings in personal force and in intellectual ability above him, and, of his successors, some might consider his claims inferior to those of Dalhousie. If we contrast him for a moment only with his two great forerunners, he was not like Clive a pioneer, walking in untrodden ways and blazing the trail of an imperial destiny through a virgin

¹ *Edinburgh Review*, vol. lxvi, p. 151.

² Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. vi, p. 398.

and primæval forest, nor was he, like Hastings, an heroic and solitary figure victoriously waging against a world in arms a contest which seemed to all but himself a lost battle. But he was, in India at any rate, and under the conditions that he found there, a supremely great administrator. It has been said of some men, of Cromwell for instance, that they were in essence greater than anything they ever said or did ; it might perhaps not unfairly be said of Wellesley that his work in India was greater than anything he himself ever became. In after life as diplomatist, minister and Viceroy—in Spain, in the Foreign Office and in Ireland—he revealed himself as an able and enlightened statesman ; but he never again touched the heights of his Indian career. As we study his history in detail, we may hope to discover some of the causes for this want of proportion between his achievements and his personality—this discrepancy between the quality of his character and his work. It has been suggested that it may have been due to a certain personal vanity ; to an ambition which was not entirely pure, not entirely disinterested. Possibly the reason may have been that he was never again surrounded by such a brilliant band of subordinates and coadjutors ; or, finally, that he was never again in the course of his life in such close co-operation and in such general sympathy with his brother Arthur, the future Duke of Wellington. Probably no one will ever know exactly how far the success of Wellesley's administration was due to the latter ; but this at least is certain, that from the combination of the elder brother's soaring imagination and comprehensive grasp in the realm of political idealism, and the younger's magnificent common sense and sanity in the world of reality, there was forged a superbly efficient instrument for the task of governing men. Nor would it be fair to omit mention here of the able administrative and diplomatic work of the fifth and youngest of the Wellesley brothers, Henry,

afterwards Lord Cowley. "In the course of my life," wrote Dundas in 1800, "I never met with any person with whom I have had more satisfaction in transacting business than with him. He joins together one of the most amiable tempers to one of the soundest judgements I ever met with."¹

One of the most striking features of Wellesley's period of office is the manner in which he accomplished his political ideas, realized his aspirations and moulded fate to his clear-cut, definite and conscious aims. Government is too often a matter of regretted compromise, of dreary second-bests, of happy or unhappy opportunism, and of reluctant modification of the ruler's will to the will of others. Few statesmen have been able to achieve their ends so completely, to impress their personal mark upon a great organism so deeply, as Wellesley achieved his ends, and impressed his mark, upon the Indian empire of his time. The lot of his predecessors was very different. Clive was called upon to meet desperate situations with hastily improvised and makeshift weapons. He moved always in an atmosphere of opposition and strife; and, though by sheer titanic force he beat down the wills of his enemies and wrested success from failure, he could do no more than leave behind him in Bengal a system which was described by one of his contemporaries as a "monstrous heap of partial arbitrary political inconsistencies"; while from the personal standpoint, such success as he attained was only won at the cost of smouldering enmities, which flared up to scorch and corrode his prematurely ended life. Hastings, even after Francis had perforce withdrawn his open and vindictive rivalry, was always under the necessity of scheming, planning and conciliating; of turning positions he could not carry by a

¹ M. Martin, *Despatches, Minutes and Correspondence of the Marquis Wellesley*, 5 vols. London, 1836-7, vol. ii, p. 609. [Quoted henceforward as Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*.]

frontal attack ; of abandoning counsels of perfection, and falling back regretfully on second courses. The Governors-General, appointed under Pitt's Act, enjoyed a position constitutionally and legally stronger than that of their forerunners, however able ; but neither Cornwallis nor Shore dreamt of arrogating to themselves the predominant powers freely conceded to Wellesley by his fellow-countrymen in India. " Lesser minds," said Lord Brougham, " were made to yield a compliance, sometimes reluctant—more frequently cheerful." ¹ When the time came for Wellesley to lay down the governor-generalship, it was a different office from the one he had taken up ; it was greater in power, responsibility and initiative. Its prestige was heightened, its control over the subordinate governorships was strengthened, its independence of the Council was more marked.

This development was conscious and deliberate. It may have been right or wrong, but in either case Wellesley must be given the credit, or discredit. He never had any doubts as to what he intended to do in India. " The main-spring of such a machine," he wrote in 1799, " as the government of India can never be safely touched by any other hand than that of the principal mover." ² The Court of Directors hardly exaggerated when they wrote in a draft despatch, intended to be sent to Bengal in 1805, but withheld by the Board of Control : " It appears to have been the intention of Marquis Wellesley to concentrate all the political powers of British India in the person of the Governor-General, and to consider the whole but as forming, with respect to him, one government, through every part and ramification of which his authority was practically and constantly to pervade." ³

¹ *Edinburgh Review*, vol. lxiii, p. 539.

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. i, p. 528.

³ India Office Records, *Home Miscellaneous Series*, 486, p. 34.

It is, of course, an arguable position that this development was reactionary and, on the whole, evil. Those who believe strongly in the virtues of constitutionalism, self-determination and the rights of subject peoples, will see little to admire in Wellesley's masterful direction of affairs. He was prone, as we shall see, to act harshly and unsympathetically, if not sometimes unjustly, towards Indian rulers. There was an undercurrent of opposition—though it remained an undercurrent—which strongly took this view. "The whole government of our eastern empire," says a contemporary writer, "was an almost uniform deviation from all good policy, national faith and honour and conscience."¹ But Wellesley's administration was undoubtedly pervaded by a noble, if somewhat dictatorial, benevolence, and of its efficiency there could be no two opinions. The really surprising thing, and the greatest testimony to Wellesley's statesmanship, is that the subordinate governments accepted the situation almost without a murmur. Opposition came not from them, but from the Court of Directors, though all the traditions of Indian administration up to that time would have suggested as probable a jealous and pragmatistical insistence on their rights against the claims of the Bengal government. The Directors were at a loss to understand the complaisance of the Governor-General's colleagues, and expressed their surprise that even the members of the Supreme Council had not checked his tendency to exclude them from his counsels and deliberations. "We cannot refrain from expressing our surprise," they wrote, "that no attempt appears to have been made on the part of any of the other members of Council to check the Governor-General in the exercise of an independent authority not warranted

¹ *A Letter to the Rt. Hon. C. J. Fox on the subject of his conduct upon the charges made by Mr. Paul [sic] against the Marquis Wellesley.* London, 1805, p. 3.

in law by claiming to participate in virtue of their office.”¹

How did Wellesley win and maintain this great position? He was nowhere greater than in his dealings with his subordinates, civil or military; in the loyalty and devotion which he won from them; and in the generosity with which he praised their success or made allowance for their failures. One may recall, for instance, the fine words he used of Colonel Monson, who by rash action had ruined all his schemes in the war with Holkar: “Whatever may have been his fate, or whatever the result of his misfortunes to my own fame, I will endeavour to shield his character from obloquy, nor will I attempt the mean purpose of sacrificing his reputation to save mine.”² Wellesley was magnificently served, and the lack of opposition from his subordinates was assuredly not due to the mediocrity of their talents. They were indeed men of remarkable capacity. Malcolm, Metcalfe, Munro, Edmonstone, Elphinstone and Alured Clarke are among the greatest of Anglo-Indian civilians and soldier-politicals, and Harris, Lake, Stuart and Arthur Wellesley among the most eminent of Indian generals. “Of an unprecedented amount,” it was said, “of public probity, moral worth, intellectual eminence, and military daring which existed in British India during the period of his administration, the largest and most brilliant portion was drawn forth, and wielded by the master mind of this great statesman.”³ It was no case of an adroit opportunist raising himself to fame by the abilities of those who served him. “No man was so eminently qualified to do everything for himself, and no man laid under larger contribution the talents of

¹ India Office Records, *Home Miscellaneous Series*, 486, pp. 22-3.

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iv, p. 205.

³ Mark Wilks, *Historical sketches of the South of India in an attempt to trace the History of Mysore*. 3 vols. London, 1810-17, vol. iii, p. 348. [Quoted henceforward as Wilks, *Mysore*.]

those around him.”¹ He could speak sternly enough, if occasion called for it. The commissioners of Malabar, who had rather patronizingly informed the Governor-General that they were prepared to submit to temporary inconveniences and evils rather than make concessions to Tippu, brought down upon themselves—in a letter which on other counts awarded them praise—a rebuke which must have made them tingle with vexation. “I am concerned,” wrote Wellesley, “to be under the necessity of observing that the tenor of this passage is utterly incompatible with the dependent and subordinate nature of the commission under which you act. It is your duty to submit implicitly to whatever inconveniences may result from the execution of the orders proceeding from the superior authorities of the British Government in India, and arising not from partial or local, but from general and comprehensive views of the public interest. Your authority is not competent in any case, or for any purpose whatever, to make either a permanent or a temporary sacrifice of the rights, dignity, or interests of the Company to Tippu Sultan or to any other power.”²

In everything Wellesley kept the initiative in his own hands and never shirked responsibility. At the same time he never hesitated to delegate wide powers ; when he had once commissioned a man, he did not again interfere in details. And so his officers felt themselves to be something more than mere instruments : “when he gave confidence,” he made it “almost unlimited ; when he conferred authority,” he made it “commensurate to the occasion.”³ He expected thereafter his subordinates to stand alone, and not to pester him for special instructions. To one who did so he answered with the rebuke, “I was neither

¹ Wilks, *Mysore*, vol. iii, p. 347.

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. i, p. 524.

³ Wilks, *Mysore*, vol. iii, p. 348.

disposed to expect from you any effort beyond the means which you possessed nor to charge you with any responsibility beyond the limits of your military duty.”¹ He became the close personal friend of many of his colleagues, and with the exception of a temporary breach with Sir David Baird and some difference of opinion on public grounds with Sir John Malcolm—otherwise one of those with whom he was most in sympathy—his relations with his subordinates were uniformly cordial. There is among his contemporaries a remarkable unanimity of testimony on this point. William Butterworth Bayley, one of the first pupils of his short-lived College of Fort William, when, as Chairman of the Company, he moved the vote for Wellesley’s statue to be erected in the India House, said—and the corroborative testimony of others precludes us from regarding the words as the mere eulogy proper to the occasion : “ He selected with unerring and intuitive judgement the instruments best calculated to carry out his magnificent plans ; while by the force of that influence which great minds exercise over their fellow men, he imbued them with his own spirit. . . . The sagacity with which he selected officers for high trust was not more remarkable than the generous confidence which he reposed in their exertions, and the liberality with which he ascribed to them the chief merit of his own successful measures.”² Again Sir John Malcolm wrote : “ His great mind pervaded the whole [empire] ; and a portion of his spirit was infused into every agent whom he employed : his authority was as fully recognised in the remotest parts of British India as in Fort William : all sought his praise ; all dreaded his censure : his confidence in those he employed was unlimited : and they were urged to exertion

¹ Martin, *Wellesley’s Despatches*, vol. i, p. 316.

² R. R. Pearce, *Memoirs and Correspondence of . . . Marquess Wellesley*. 3 vols. London, 1846, vol. iii, p. 435. [Quoted henceforward as Pearce, *Memoirs*.]

by every motive that can stimulate a good or proud mind to action. He was as eager to applaud as he was reluctant to condemn those whom he believed conscientious in the discharge of their public duty. It was the habit of his mind to be slow in counsel, but rapid in action ; and he expected the greatest efforts from those he employed in the execution of his measures, whom he always relieved from every species of vexatious counteraction and delay that could arise from the untimely intrusion of official forms, or the unreasonable pretensions of inferior authorities. It was indeed with him a principle to invest them with all the power they could require to effect the objects which they were instructed to attain ; and though there can be no doubt of the great and extraordinary merit of the distinguished officers who commanded the British armies during his administration, it is to that liberal confidence which gave them all the impression of the fullest power, and the most complete scope for the exercise of their judgement, that their unparalleled success is chiefly to be ascribed.”¹ “ The distinction of his favour to his colleagues,” says another writer, “ was the more honourable because no interest could procure it, and the upright, zealous, and able discharge of their high duties could alone presume to lay claim to it.”²

Wellesley impressed all men from the moment he landed in India with the comprehensiveness of his views, the completeness of his knowledge, his luminous grasp of difficult and complicated situations, and his instinct for driving straight to the heart of a problem. “ The trivial, ordinary embarrassments of detail,” he wrote, “ are con-

¹ Sir John Malcolm, *The Political History of India*. 2 vols. London, 1826, vol. i, pp. 331-2.

² Britannicus, *A Letter to Samuel Whitbread, Esq., M.P., upon the military conduct of Lord Wellington, with some remarks upon the Marquis Wellesley's government in India*. London, 1810, p. 93. [Quoted henceforward as Britannicus, *A Letter* . . .]

quered the moment they are despised.”¹ From his training in Parliament and high political office he derived his wide and statesmanlike view, but where he acquired his extraordinary mastery of Indian detail remains something of a mystery. It was this combination of wide surveys and accurate knowledge which made him supreme as an administrator. “He directed,” says Bayley, “vast, distant and complicated operations with a degree of precision scarcely to be looked for in the most ordinary transactions.”² No military operations ever worked out so accurately according to plan as the campaigns of his governor-generalship. There was only one failure, and that was due to a deviation from his instructions. Lord Brougham said of the Mysorean war, and the words might equally have been used of the campaigns with Sindhia and Berar in 1803 : “its success appears to have been rendered as nearly a matter of absolute certainty as anything in politics and in war can be.”³

Further, Wellesley possessed the moral courage of the statesman in the highest possible degree. “He preferred,” as it was well said, “the manly examination of real danger to the torpor of a delusive and fallacious security.”⁴ He faced every difficulty, he forestalled every peril, he never rested on his oars. His success in war was overwhelming, just because, with relentless thoroughness, he had provided for every possible contingency. He had the great advantage of a definite, consistent, and coherent policy. He formulated it himself, and never swerved from his efforts to realize it. It might well be summed up in the words of his first biographer : “England stands confessedly in India as an ascendant power ; invested with supremacy

¹ S. R. Lushington, *The Life and Services of General Lord Harris*. London, 1840, p. 255.

² R. R. Pearce, *Memoirs*, vol. iii, p. 435.

³ *Edinburgh Review*, vol. lxiii, p. 548.

⁴ Wilks, *Mysore*, vol. iii, p. 349.

in virtue of European civilization and Anglo-Saxon energy.”¹ But his own expressions were equally emphatic : “ The Company, with relation to its territory in India, must be viewed in the capacity of a sovereign power.”² And again : “ We have not hesitated to consider the extensive and valuable possessions to the government of which the Company have succeeded, as a great empire.”³ The policy may have been right or wrong, enlightened or reactionary, but at any rate its advocacy, without misgiving and without repentance, gave to his administration a wonderful dynamic force in action and unmistakable results in achievement. “ A consciousness of his own superior powers,” wrote Wilks, “ rendered Lord Mornington confident in opinions once fixed, and in measures once adopted.”⁴

In considering the reasons for the great position Wellesley occupied, there remain two points to be borne in mind. In the first place, it is not perhaps unfair to say that he was fortunate in that his qualities peculiarly fitted him, and his limitations did not disqualify him, for the governor-generalship of India. He was a great despatch writer, but an indifferent orator ; he was better equipped for working with subordinates than with colleagues, for dictating minutes than for persuading assemblies. He made a few effective speeches in Parliament, as, for instance, one in 1794 against the French Revolution, but he was a poor debater. His style, even in his much admired minutes, forcible, lucid, logical, and crushing in its accumulating force, yet suggests in its less pleasing qualities what Lecky calls the “ repulsive ” style of his friend Pitt, and the words which the historian uses of Pitt’s diction might often be applied not without justice to that of

¹ R. R. Pearce, *Memoirs*, vol. ii, p. 132.

² Martin, *Wellesley’s Despatches*, vol. iii, p. 529.

³ *Idem.*, vol. ii, p. 312.

⁴ Wilks, *Mysore*, vol. iii, p. 347. See p. 17, note 1.

Wellesley—"redundant and copious beyond measure, a commonplace thought is beaten out into period after period, piled one on another with a monotonous and architectural symmetry, and with a manifold desire to produce the greatest possible pomp and parade of language."¹ There is a rather cruel criticism of Wellesley's capacity and demeanour as an orator, written in 1813, by Hazlitt, which probably enshrines a certain aspect of the truth: "This nobleman seems to have formed himself on those lines in Pope :

‘All hail him victor in both gifts of song,
Who sings so loudly, and who sings so long.’

He aspires with infinite alacrity to the character of a great orator ; and, if we were disposed to take the will for the deed, we should give him full credit for it. We confess, those of his speeches which we have heard, appear to us prodigies of physical prowess and intellectual imbecility. The ardour of his natural temperament, stimulating and irritating the ordinary faculties of his mind, the exuberance of his animal spirits, contending with the barrenness of his genius, produce a degree of dull vivacity, of pointed insignificance, and impotent energy, which is without any parallel but itself. It is curious, though somewhat painful, to see this lively little lord always in the full career of his subject, and never advancing a jot the nearer ; seeming to utter volumes in every word, and yet saying nothing ; retaining the same unabated vehemence of voice and action without anything to excite it ; still keeping alive the promise and the expectation of genius without once satisfying it—soaring into mediocrity with adventurous enthusiasm, harrowed up by some plain matter of fact, writhing with agony under a truism, and launch-

¹ W. E. H. Lecky, *A History of England in the Eighteenth Century*. London, 1878-90, 8 vols., vol. v, p. 7.

ing a commonplace with all the fury of a thunder-bolt !”¹

Finally, Wellesley was the friend of Pitt, Grenville and Dundas. He had, as Wilks truly points out, “the inestimable benefit of early friendship and confidential intercourse with the great statesmen who then directed in England the general interests of the empire.”² Yet despite all personal defects—some of which it is easy though unfair to exaggerate—and all adventitious advantages, there remains a greatness of achievement in Wellesley’s Indian career totally inexplicable except on the assumption that in affairs, in administration and in the management of men, he stands out supreme above the ordinary statesmen of his time. Hazlitt, the literary critic, could see with pitiless clearness his faults in literary taste and mark his rhetorical defects. He could not see—for it lay altogether outside his world—the wonderful driving power, the defeatless industry, the noble perseverance, the penetrating vision, that enabled Wellesley to carry, all but to its full completion, his great design—a design consciously shaped and chosen—of remoulding in political aspect, and revolutionizing in territorial extent, an Eastern empire.

¹ *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt*. Ed. by A. R. Waller. 12 vols. London, 1902-4, vol. iii, p. 47.

² Wilks, *Mysore*, vol. iii, p. 47.

CHAPTER II

FAMILY. EARLY LIFE APPOINTMENT TO INDIA

RICHARD COLLEY WELLESLEY was born on June 20, 1760, the first year of the reign of George III. He sprang from a family of Irish landed gentry but recently ennobled. His father, Garrett Wellesley, or Wesley, as the name was then generally spelt—a spelling long retained by the Duke of Wellington—was second Baron Mornington, first Viscount Wellesley and first Earl of Mornington. He was a composer of some note, and a few of his glees, chants and anthems are still sung. He died at the age of forty-six in 1781. Wellesley's mother, born Anne Trevor, daughter of Arthur Hill Trevor, afterwards Lord Duncannon, died in 1831, having lived to see the greatness of her extraordinarily able family of sons. Few great men have owed, or at least considered that they owed, so little to their parents as Lord Wellesley. Though he proved himself to his mother a good and affectionate son, as is shown in her grateful letters, he could sometimes, apparently, speak of both his parents in a rather repellent tone. "My Father and Mother," he wrote in 1840, "alas, frivolous and careless personages, like most of the Irish nobility of that time . . ." ¹ Yet, if there is anything in the doctrine of heredity, there must surely have been powers and abilities latent in the peer musician and his retiring wife to have produced one of the most remarkable family of brothers in history. Lady Mornington was obviously not without her share of culture and wit. Lord Brougham relates that on one occasion, when proceeding

¹ British Museum. *Addit. MSS.*, 37416, fol. 244.

to the Houses of Parliament, her carriage was obstructed by crowds pressing too close to it, and turning to one of her sons she said, "So much for the honour of being mother of the Gracchi." ¹ The record of the brothers was remarkable. Richard, the eldest, won an English peerage and an Irish Marquisate. He was successively Governor-General of India, Minister to Spain, Foreign Secretary and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. In June 1812 he was offered the premiership. The second, William Wellesley, afterwards William Wellesley Pole, was a prominent member of the Irish and English Parliaments. He defended his brother against the charges brought by Paull as to his Indian administration. He was Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1809, became Lord Maryborough in 1811, and eventually succeeded as third Earl of Mornington in 1842. The third brother was Arthur, Duke of Wellington, the victor of Waterloo and Prime Minister of England. The fourth, Gerald Wellesley, took Holy Orders and became Canon Residentiary of Durham. The fifth, Henry, gave valuable assistance to his elder brother in India, serving as private secretary, commissioner for the settlement of Mysore, special envoy to Oudh and Lieutenant-Governor of the Ceded Provinces. He then had a most distinguished diplomatic career, becoming successively British ambassador at Madrid, Vienna and Paris. He refused in 1827 the Governor-Generalship of India,² and was raised to the peerage in 1823 as Lord Cowley.

Richard Wellesley was sent at ten years of age to Harrow. He was removed, after having run away, for his share in the escapade of barring out Heath, the new headmaster, who was unpopular as being an Etonian, the boys

¹ Henry, Lord Brougham, *Historical Sketches of Statesmen who flourished in the time of George III.* London, 1839, p. 268.

² Lord Curzon doubts whether the Governor-Generalship was actually offered him. Marquis Curzon of Kedleston, *British Government in India.* 2 vols. London, 1825, vol. ii, p. 89.

desiring the appointment of Parr, an assistant master. There is an amusing reference to the trouble in a memoir of his early life written by Wellesley himself : “ the confusion,” he wrote, “ during the interregnum is indescribable, the government both of the School and the town was held and exercised by the boys. Being a great favourite, I obtained high rule among them ; and I was so much honoured that my friends nailed a few rotten boards together and with the aid of some old cartwheels, with which they made free from an adjoining wheelwright’s shop, knocked up a carriage for me in which four boys drew me all round the town and the neighbourhood. We seized a very handsome new chariot belonging to Governor Buckwell of Harrow, and having gutted it, and distributed the plunder (of which I obtained a share), we (as the phrase was) precipitated it down the Tarpeian, i.e. we threw it over the steepest hill of Harrow, into an old gravel pit, where it was broken to pieces. I was much distinguished among the partisans of Parr on this occasion, and I used to drive out in triumph in my new chariot every evening, to the terror of all quiet persons.” ¹ After these exploits, this young desperado (of the mature age of ten years) was, through the kind offices of Archbishop Cornwallis, uncle of the Governor-General of India, sent to Eton, where he remained six years, and became an exceptionally fine and polished classical scholar. Dr. Goodall afterwards declared that he was the superior of the great Porson, of whom he was a contemporary at the school. He went up to Christ Church, Oxford, in 1778, and distinguished himself by winning the Chancellor’s Prize for Latin Verse, the subject being the death of Captain Cook ; but he left without a degree in 1781, when, on his father’s death, he succeeded as second Earl of Mornington, to take on his still young shoulders the

¹ British Museum. *Addit. MSS.* 37416, fol. 346.

care of his family of brothers and sisters. He fulfilled these duties unsparingly, and all his brothers, especially Arthur, owed much to his early care of them.

Wellesley's ¹ relations with women were, according to modern notions, unconventional and irregular. For many years he lived with a mistress, a young French woman, Hyacinthe Gabrielle Roland, who, though socially much beneath him, appears to have been clever and attractive. Eventually, in 1794, he married her, though not till after she had borne him five children, none of whom, therefore, were born in wedlock. At one time he eagerly desired to have her with him in India, but was dissuaded ; partly, no doubt, on the ground of her social inferiority, and the circumstances of their first union ; partly, because it was necessary for her to bring up the children at home. This she seems to have done very successfully, for we find Addington writing to Wellesley in April 1799 : " Lady Mornington appears to be in perfect health, though she has been of late very much agitated in consequence of your wish that she should join you in India. My opinion was asked, but the occasion was one on which it could not possibly be given : the manner however in which Lady Mornington expressed herself on this subject served to heighten my respect for her, both as a Wife and a Mother ; indeed the manners and conduct of your children, as far as I have had opportunities of becoming acquainted with them, exhibit a very striking exception to the effects usually produced by the absence of a Father." ² In spite, however, of Lady Mornington's circumspect conduct and sound method of bringing up her children, on Wellesley's

¹ It has seemed the most convenient course to refer to the Governor-General throughout this memoir by his later title, which happens also to be his surname, and the name of his English barony, but readers will of course remember that his proper title was Earl of Mornington, till his elevation to the marquissate in December 1799.

² British Museum. *Addit. MSS.* 37416, fols. 42-5.

return from India, they ceased to live together. The seven years' parting had probably estranged their old love ; Lady Wellesley (as she now was) seems to have shown a certain lack of tact in dealing with her husband's disappointment at the want of appreciation that he met with in England ; and it is possible, as is sometimes hinted, that he gave her some cause for wifely jealousy, though I believe that there is no evidence for this last supposition, which probably rests on idle scandal. She died in 1816. Nine years later, when he was in his sixty-fifth year, he married Mrs. Patterson, *née* Caton, an American woman of beauty, charm and distinction, whose sisters were the Duchess of Leeds and Lady Stafford.

In spite of the domestic cares that came upon him at so early an age, Wellesley turned his attention from the first also to public affairs, for he was swayed, as he wrote in 1840, " by that glorious passion for solid fame, that noble ambition to obtain power and honour by deserving them, which has been my ' star of Arcadie,' my ' Tyrian cynosure.' " ¹ He sat first in the Irish House of Lords, but not finding there wide enough scope for his energies, he also entered the British House of Commons in 1784, the year of Pitt's India Act. He was returned first for Beer-alston, a pocket borough belonging to Lord Beverley ; in 1786 he was returned for Saltash, but was unseated on petition. He sat afterwards successively for Windsor, in 1788, and for Old Sarum, in 1796. His maiden speech was made in 1786, appropriately enough on Hastings and the Rohilla war. Daniel Pulteney, in a letter to the Duke of Rutland, thus reported on his demeanour : " There were several young speakers last night, but nobody worth notice except Lord Mornington, who made his *coup d'essai* here by a skirmish with Lord North, I suppose in order to harden himself a little, for he had not considered, nor did

¹ British Museum. *Addit. MSS.* 37416, fol. 244.

he speak at all to, the subject, though if your Grace knows of any of his friends, they may be told he lost no credit, but much the contrary, by a very spirited manner that engaged the attention of the House.”¹ In the same year he was made a Junior Lord of the Treasury, and in 1793 he became a member of the Board of Control under the presidency of Dundas.

In spite of Wellesley's autocratic and imperial rule in India, he never ceased to be in many respects a liberal, and this characteristic appears clearly in his early career. In Ireland he supported a bill for the relief of Protestant dissenters, and he was a life-long supporter of Catholic emancipation. He was a convinced free trader, and in 1792 he proposed the immediate abolition of the slave trade. To a far larger extent than his younger and greater brother, he ranged himself on the side of the causes of the future which were destined ultimately to prevail. Creditable as his progress had been, his eager ambition was by no means satisfied, and he wrote in 1794 : “ I cannot bear to creep on in my present position.”² In the same year, Addington with a flash of insight said to him, “ You want a wider sphere ; you are dying of the cramp.”³

His appointment as Governor-General came about through a curious series of changes. Sir John Shore retired in March 1798. Lord Hobart, the Governor of Madras, had been promised the succession ; but the dangerous attitude of the Bengal army officers, who had banded themselves together, under mutual promises and guarantees of corporate support, to resist certain orders of the authorities at home, determined the Directors to nominate Lord Cornwallis. The latter, having in vain endeavoured to persuade Dundas himself to proceed to India, consented

¹ *Historical MSS. Commission, MSS. of Duke of Rutland*, vol. iii, p. 306.

² *The Wellesley Papers*, by the Editor of *The Windham Papers*. 2 vols. London, 1914, vol. i, p. 21. [Quoted henceforward as *Wellesley Papers*.]

³ W. M. Torrens, *The Marquess Wellesley*. London, 1850, p. 100.

reluctantly to resume office, with the characteristic words : " I shall not depart from the line of conduct which I have invariably pursued through life of sacrificing all private considerations of comfort and happiness to the service of the public." ¹ He was actually sworn in as Governor-General on February 1, 1797 ; though, as we shall see, he was not destined on this occasion to go to India. Lord Hobart naturally resigned the governorship of Madras, and Wellesley, with Hobart's full assent and approval,² accepted both the office he was laying down and also the reversion of the governor-generalship. The acceptance of a subordinate presidency may seem hardly consonant with Wellesley's ambition, but we may conjecture that he saw for the moment little prospect of advancement at home, and also that it was probably necessary for him as an impecunious Irish peer to acquire a larger income. Some interesting light is thrown upon the rewards of an Indian career at this time by his letter to Bathurst of July 5, 1797, where he wrote that the salary and emoluments of Madras amounted to £18,000 or £20,000 a year, while the expenses did not exceed £10,000.³ Wellesley, with his ardent

¹ C. Ross, *Correspondence of Charles, First Marquis Cornwallis*. 3 vols. London, 1859, vol. ii, p. 319.

² Afterwards relations between Wellesley and Hobart became for a time very strained. Wellesley in 1800 protested very strongly to Dundas against the possibility of Hobart succeeding him, speaking of him as " my most bitter and implacable enemy whose hatred is derived from the consciousness of his own base ingratitude and flagrant injustice towards me." *Historical MSS. Commission. Letters of J. B. Fortescue, Drogheda*. Vol. vi, p. 337. But later in a letter to Addington he withdrew all his charges : " Circumstances have recently come to my knowledge which have convinced me that I had entertained erroneous and unjust prejudices against Lord Hobart since my arrival in India. I am now satisfied that he never has been untrue to his friendship for me . . . and that he is at present entitled to my regard, confidence and esteem. . . . It is not for me to enter into the question of Lord Hobart's qualification for any office. . . . But I desire you to understand that his appointment to any official situation whatever (even to succeed me whenever I may return home) would be wholly unobjectionable to me on every personal and private ground." *British Museum. Addit. MSS.* 37282, fol. 411.

³ *Wellesley Papers*, vol. i, p. 32.

and imperious temperament, might have proved a difficult colleague to Cornwallis, but a more splendid destiny awaited him. Cornwallis discovered that the Directors were discussing the points at issue with a committee of the Bengal officers in London. He regarded this as a practical condonation of mutiny, and resigned office in August 1797, to proceed to Ireland as Lord Lieutenant—a course he afterwards bitterly regretted. “My evil stars,” he wrote in March 1798, “have determined that I never should enjoy quiet or comfort, and after relieving me from what I then thought a painful task (a second embarkation to India), have driven me into a situation ten times more arduous and in every respect more intolerable.”¹ Again, four months later, he wrote: “Of all the situations which I ever held, the present is by far the most intolerable to me, and I have often within this last fortnight wished myself back in Bengal.”² Wellesley therefore at once succeeded as Governor-General, and having been created a peer of Great Britain, by the title of Baron Wellesley, sailed for India, November 9, 1797. He arrived at Madras in April, and at Calcutta in May.

¹ Charles Ross, *Correspondence of . . . Marquis Cornwallis*, 3 vols. London, 1859, vol. ii, p. 361.

² Pearce, *Memoirs*, vol. i, p. 136.

CHAPTER III

THE PROBLEM ON WELLESLEY'S SUCCESSION


IT will be useful at this stage to take a survey of the British possessions and of the native states, as they existed at the time of Wellesley's landing. The former were in three great blocks round the three Presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, and the only means of communication between them, without passing through foreign territory, was by sea.

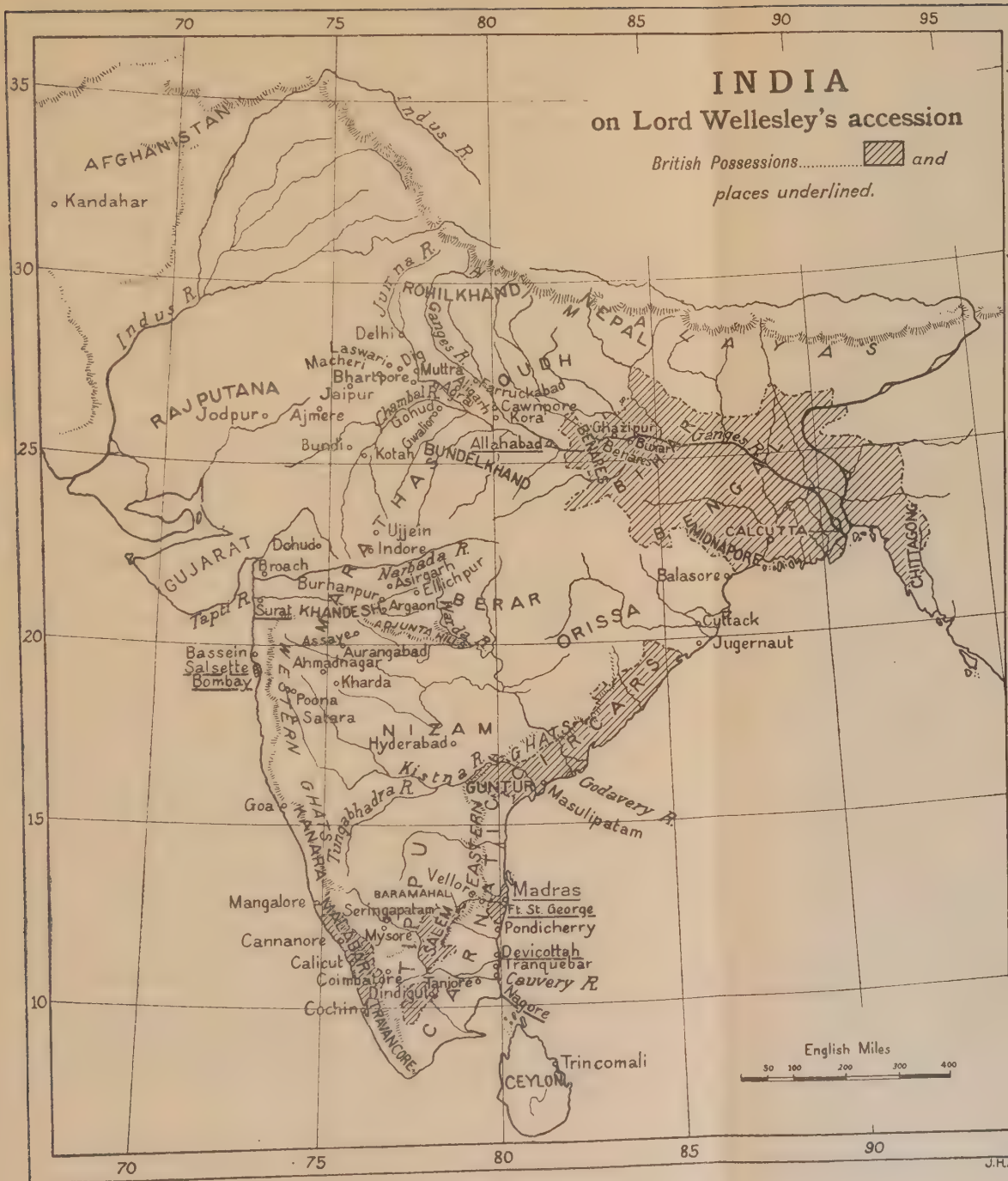
(1) Bengal consisted of the modern provinces of Bengal and Bihar with part of Orissa, and Chittagong on the other side of the Bay. The only acquisition made since Lord Clive's acceptance of the *Diwani* (i.e. the right to collect and administer the land revenues of Bengal, which had practically, though not formally, carried with it the territorial sovereignty over that province) had been the suzerainty over Benares and Ghazipur under Warren Hastings in 1775, and the fortress of Allahabad taken over from the Nawab of Oudh under Sir John Shore.

(2) Bombay, now under Governor Duncan, had by the Treaty of Salbye in 1782 been stripped of the territories occupied in the Maratha war of 1778-82 in the time of Warren Hastings, and was practically reduced to the two islands of Bombay and Salsette.

(3) Madras was made up of various tracts of territory held by different tenures. In absolute ownership, the Company possessed the presidency town of Madras with some adjoining villages, and three distinct districts wrung from Tippu Sultan of Mysore in 1793, by the Treaty of Seringapatam, namely, the land between Ambur and

on Lord Wellesley's accession

British Possessions..... and
places underlined.



Caroor, including the Baramahal, bounded on the west by the Eastern Ghats and the Cauvery ; the fort and surrounding districts of Dindigul ; a considerable extent of the Malabar coast about 200 miles long, including the important ports of Cannanore and Calicut. The Northern Circars and the Guntur Circar (south of the river Kistna) were nominally held on a *quasi*-feudal tenure in return for tribute from the Nizam of Hyderabad, though they were never likely to pass from British control. In time of war the Company had the right by treaty to take over the management of the revenues of Arcot and Tanjore, which were both, like Oudh, largely the prey of European adventurers.

It must be remembered that these three presidencies were not only geographically separate and distinct, but in spite of the supremacy granted to Bengal by Pitt's Act, they were in great measure self-contained and independent. Under Shore and Cornwallis relations between them had been on the whole harmonious, but far more nearly resembled diplomatic negotiations between friendly states, than the ties that bind provincial governments to their superior.

The condition of the Indian powers in 1798 next engages our attention. To the north-west of Bengal stretched the great populous misgoverned country of Oudh, which had been enriched in 1774 by Rohilkhand, made over to it by Hastings, still nominally independent, but really almost an outlying portion of the Bengal Presidency. It was now practically controlled by the British Resident, a large part of its revenues went to the support of a British subsidiary force, and most of its commerce had passed into the hands of European adventurers. In 1797 a revolution had taken place, the reigning Nawab, Saadat Ali, was hated by his subjects, and his throne seemed far from secure. The Mogul Emperor was still the Shah Alam

who had been restored by the Marathas to Delhi on Christmas Day, 1771. In 1788, when deprived for a few months of Sindhia's protection, he had been seized and blinded by a revolting Afghan chief. He was now a state prisoner in the hands of Daulat Rao Sindhia, or, more immediately, in those of Perron, the French commander of Sindhia's northern armies. The Rajput chieftains to the south and west of Delhi were gradually being forced to enter into more or less dependent relations with the Maratha ruler. They were ready and willing to ally themselves with any power that would save them from Sindhia. To the north-west again lay the Sikhs, of whom little was known at this time, though it was strongly suspected that they would not prove powerful enough to check the expected invasion of Zeman Shah, the ruler of Afghanistan. The vision of the Afghan host, since it had appeared at Lahore in 1796, loomed up as a vague and dreadful menace overhanging the Indian plains. In the south of India, the Nawab of the Carnatic, or of Arcot, as he is frequently called, could hardly be regarded as an independent prince. He had practically mortgaged all his possessions to the junior servants of the Company, whose claims he deftly and unscrupulously played off against those of their employers. He lived in a great palace in the suburbs of Madras, and his presence corrupted and embarrassed the whole administration of the presidency. The question of the "Nabob of Arcot's debts," which will be dealt with in Chapter IX, is one of the greatest administrative scandals in British history. The Nizam of Hyderabad, nominally the overlord of the Deccan and generally the faithful ally of the British, had been alienated by Sir John Shore's refusal to support him against the Marathas in 1795. Though, owing to their internal dissensions, he had largely escaped from the disastrous terms imposed upon him by the Marathas after his defeat at

Khorda, he was still overshadowed by their influence. The chief support of his throne, apart from them, was an army of 14,000 men, trained and commanded by French officers. British suzerainty over the Deccan, therefore, seemed likely to pass into the hands either of their great European enemy, or into those of their most formidable Indian rivals. Tippu Sultan, the son of the great Muhammadan usurper, Hyder Ali, who had built up a formidable dominion on the ruins of the Hindu state of Mysore, was still nursing a sullen and revengeful wrath for the loss of half his dominions at the close of Cornwallis's war of 1790-2. At the moment of Wellesley's arrival this "ancient native enemy of the Company" had allied himself with the French for the purpose of attacking the British nation in India.

There remain the states of the Maratha pentarchy, forming a great compact central block of territories of varying breadth stretching right across central India. A line drawn from sea to sea, from the Orissa shore of the Bay of Bengal to the Gulf of Cambay, would have passed entirely through Maratha country. Readers who are unfamiliar with Indian history may be reminded that these five states were ruled by the Peishwa of Poona, Sindhia of Ujjein and Gwalior, Holkar of Indore, the Raja of Berar and the Gaikwar of Baroda. The Rajas of Satara were, of course, the nominal heads of the confederacy, but they were now mere *rois fainéants*, eternally immured in their prison palace, who, though treated with kindness and ceremonial respect, were forced to see all their power wielded by the Peishwas, originally their chief ministers. The usurped functions of the latter were as much a matter of hereditary descent as the meaningless titles of their masters. Sindhia and Holkar may be loosely, but not altogether inaccurately, described as the generals of the confederacy who had gradually acquired territorial

possessions and hereditary thrones. At the moment of Wellesley's arrival Poona, weakened by the disputed succession of 1795, following on the suicide (or accidental death¹) of Madhu Rao Narrain, was entirely eclipsed by the power of Sindhia or Holkar, according as either was for the moment in the ascendant, and was governed by the most worthless, the wickedest and the falsest of the Peishwas, Baji Rao II. Sindhia was in 1798 the greatest Indian sovereign. He ruled northern and central India from the Ganges and Jumna to Poona and the Tungabhadra river. He too depended largely on an army trained and officered by Frenchmen ; though at this particular time, as Arthur Wellesley declared, their influence was not so predominant as that of their fellow-countrymen in Hyderabad.² But Sindhia was becoming too civilized and too cosmopolitan to be regarded as a typical Maratha. "Born and educated," says Peter Auber, "at a distance from the Deccan, surrounded by Europeans, Muhammadans, and Rajputs, and despising the irregular and predatory hordes, whose activity and enterprise had established the fame of his ancestors, Daulat Rao Sindhia was more the principal sovereign of India, than a member of the Maratha confederacy."³ He was residing, when Wellesley came out, in the neighbourhood of Poona, and his presence there was, according to Malcolm, as injurious to British interests as his absence from Hindustan, "for while he stayed in the Deccan, the power of the Peishwa was dormant, if not extinct," and

¹ C. A. Kincaid and Rao Bahadur D. B. Parasnis. *A History of the Maratha People*, 3 vols. London, 1918-25, vol. iii, p. 179. The authors suggest, and with some plausibility, that the evidence is in favour of an accidental death.

² S. J. Owen, *A Selection from the Despatches . . . relating to India of . . . the Duke of Wellington*. Oxford, 1880, p. 4. [Quoted henceforward as Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*.]

³ Peter Auber, *Rise and Progress of the British Power in India*, 2 vols. London, 1837, vol. ii, p. 277. [Quoted henceforward as Auber.]

“the absence of Sindhia from Hindustan threw upon the British government almost the whole defence of that quarter of India.”¹ The rulers of Indore in 1798 were in evil case. Jeswant Rao Holkar, the real successor to Tukaji Holkar, who had died in 1797, had fled from Sindhia, ultimately to Hindustan, where he joined the latter's rebellious subjects. He was fated within a few years to enjoy a great revival of power. Holkar was the true Maratha, the leader of plundering bands, who never forgot that the fortunes of his race were on their saddle-bow. The Bhonsla Raja of Berar at this time held himself somewhat aloof from the complications at Poona, and, in his present mood, seemed not unfriendly to the British. Peter Auber notes that “although connected with the Peishwa as supreme head of the Maratha power, [he] did not stand so immediately in the relation of a feudatory as Sindhia and Holkar.”² Wellesley considered the strength of the Raja of Berar to lie in the fact that he possessed forts commanding the dominions of the Company and the Nizam, that he had the power, through his possession of Cuttack, to cut the communications between Bengal and the Northern Circars, while there was on the north of Hyderabad a considerable interlacing of the Bhonsla Raja's and the Nizam's dominions, which gave the former the opportunity of maintaining vexatious claims.³ The Gaikwar of Baroda had withdrawn into his western districts. He had suffered much at the hands both of Sindhia and the Peishwa, and was not destined again to draw sword against the British power.

Such was the position as regards the Indian states which confronted Wellesley on his arrival. It is generally

¹ Sir John Malcolm, *The Political History of India*, 2 vols. London, 1826, vol. i, p. 198. [Quoted henceforward as Malcolm, *History of India*.]

² Auber, vol. ii, p. 272.

³ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iv, p. 140.

said that Shore's policy of non-intervention had broken down, and there were no doubt some alarming features in the political situation. The Nizam was drifting away. It was clear that only the internal dissensions of the Maratha states were preserving his weakly defended territories from plunder and disruption. The presence of French adventurers in command of Indian armies was undoubtedly a danger, though a danger the exact magnitude of which it was very difficult to estimate. Arthur Wellesley labours to prove that the non-intervention policy had not even been successful in concentrating the Company's defences or in conserving its finances. The revenue had actually declined by about £165,000 a year since 1793, the year of Shore's accession to office. The debt had increased, and credit had markedly declined.¹ Vanished political prestige had not even been counterbalanced by an improved financial position. Sir John Malcolm, for all his urbanity and his obvious disinclination to criticize Shore harshly, has no hesitation in condemning the policy of neutrality. "It was proved from the events of this administration," he says, "that no ground of political advantage could be abandoned without being instantly occupied by an enemy ; and that to resign influence, was not merely to resign power, but to allow that power to pass into hands hostile to the British government." This policy "had only the effect of making the British government stationary, while all around it advanced, and of exposing it to dangers arising from the revolutions of its neighbours, while it was even denied the power of adapting its policy to the change of circumstances." ² In detail, Tippu Sultan had greatly "recruited his resources," while his "spirit of hostility was unabated," the Nizam was "reduced in reputation as well as in real strength," the

¹ Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, p. 2.

² Malcolm, *History of India*, vol. i, p. 192.

power of Sindhia "had arrived at a most alarming eminence."¹

Yet it would not perhaps be difficult to show that the Indian political sky was rarely free from similar clouds, and Wellesley himself described the situation as "extremely critical, but, in my opinion, by no means alarming."² Had Cornwallis not resigned in 1797, we can well imagine that no great upheaval would have taken place ; that Tippu would have been permitted to make his peace ; and that the *status quo ante*, with some adjustments and some modifications, would have been continued. It is possible to overstate the theory that in India the only alternative to retrogression is aggrandizement. But Wellesley, as we know, within seven years worked a wonderful transformation. The kingdom of Mysore was swept away ; the Nizam's French-trained battalions were broken up ; the Company took over the complete control of the Carnatic, Tanjore and Surat ; Oudh was shorn of her valuable north-western provinces ; the Peishwa was bound in subsidiary alliance to the British power ; Sindhia and Berar were vanquished in brilliant campaigns and mulcted of important territories. Then came the only errors and failures of this breathless but triumphant administration—the early disasters of the war with Holkar. They were already being more than retrieved when Wellesley, on his brother Arthur's perhaps too precipitate advice, and yielding to the resentment of the Court of Directors, who had for long been regarding their Governor-General's victorious progress with feelings about equally compounded of astonishment and dislike, resigned his office.

Two questions now arise : first, was this policy of conquest and absorption really necessary ? and secondly,

¹ Malcolm, *History of India*, vol. i, pp. 187-8.

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. i, p. 192.

was it justified? We may perhaps doubt whether the policy was absolutely necessary. Something short of Wellesley's ruthless penalties for treachery and equivocation on the part of Indian rulers, of his abounding energy and amazing promptitude in meeting even far-off possibilities of danger, and of his fixed determination to sweep away political shams and legal fictions, might still have preserved the British empire of India. It is possible to say that the French proved quite unable to do more than beguile Tippu Sultan to his destruction; that the French officers in the Nizam's service were easily surrounded and seized, while those in the pay of Sindhia proved mainly eager to build a golden bridge of retreat for themselves and their wealth, and heartlessly left their employer in the lurch. It is difficult to believe now that either Napoleon's scheme in 1798 of massing 100,000 men on the Euphrates and marching on India, or the more carefully concerted plan in 1801, made in alliance with the Tsar Paul of Russia, could ever have had the remotest prospect of success. "With regard to the plans," wrote Wilks, "of dividing unconquered Arabia into various republics, as the *via sacra* of democracy from Paris to Calcutta, the wonders really accomplished by the efforts of revolutionary France cannot restrain a smile, at this projected extension of fraternity among the defenders and the religious plunderers of the holy cities: a march through the inheritance of the robbers of the desert; or at best through a region depending on foreign countries for its own food, to reach the sister republic of Citizen Tippu." ¹

To the second question—was the policy justified?—we may, without necessarily approving the details, answer that, broadly speaking, and especially in relation to Mysore, the Nizam, and the Peishwa, it was. In war it is

¹ Wilks, *Mysore*, vol. iii, p. 393.

fatal to underrate the enemy. If that enemy offers you, by weak and premature movements, the opportunity to inflict upon him a crushing reverse, the fault is his. Wellesley can hardly be blamed for taking the threats of Tippu, the gasconade of Malartic and Decaen, and the grandiose schemes of Napoleon at their face value. The fact that none of these menaces materialized into a real peril is after all a proof, not that they were never formidable, but that they were completely countered. The difficulties and dangers at the beginning of Wellesley's rule are sometimes not appreciated simply because they were so triumphantly surmounted. Above all, it must be remembered that in dealing with Oriental powers, at any rate at this time of the world's history, a greater margin of safety had to be left than would have been sufficient in dealing with western states. You could not depend upon an Indian ruler acting with loyalty or according to the dictates of enlightened self-interest. The whole texture of the political world was less solid, less rational, than in Europe. Indian states were capable of the most embarrassing treasons, the most disconcerting loyalties. "The situation," writes Malcolm, "of a dependent state, with a population of fifty millions, at the distance of ten thousand miles from the principal state and surrounded by governments without faith, or even long-sighted prudence, is unparalleled in the history of the world."¹ Further, it is most unfair to leave out of account, as is sometimes done, the fact that the dangers and difficulties of the purely Indian situation were overshadowed by the peril arising from Republican and Napoleonic France. Everywhere else in the world, except in India and on the open seas, defeat and disaster were attending the arms of England and her allies during Wellesley's period of office. It is as

¹ Sir John Malcolm, *Sketch of the Political History of India*. . . . London, 1811. Preface, p. v.

well to recapitulate the bare facts. Wellesley sailed to India in 1797, one of the darkest years in English history. England was then fighting the three maritime powers—France, Spain and Holland. Her last ally, Austria, was routed by Bonaparte at Rivoli, and concluded peace with France at Campo Formio. The first coalition had failed. In this year there was a terrible financial crisis, gold payments were suspended, not to be resumed till 1821. It was the year of the great naval mutinies at Spithead and the Nore. Ireland was on the eve of rebellion. The harvest had failed. This was surely a terrible period at which to be stationed in an outpost of empire, and we can hardly blame the man who declined to take any risks. Wellesley started on his homeward voyage in August 1805, and while he was still on the seas, 30,000 Austrians under Mack had surrendered at Ulm to the enveloping French armies, Napoleon had entered Vienna in triumph, won the greatest of all his victories at Austerlitz and shattered the third coalition by the Treaty of Pressburg. Wellesley's best friend and most consistent supporter, William Pitt, died in January 1806, a few weeks after the Governor-General's landing, crushed and heart-broken by these appalling disasters.

Arthur Wellesley was speaking no more than the truth when he wrote in December 1805: "You have this additional consolation in the reflection that by your firmness and decision you have not only saved but enlarged and secured the valuable empire entrusted to your government at a time when everything else was a wreck and the existence even of Great Britain was problematical."¹ But while these facts add to his fame in the eyes of posterity, they only concealed it from the vision of his own generation. Girt with their own great peril in the West, men had no leisure to turn their gaze eastwards. "The

¹ Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, pp. 566-7.

contemporary events of the continental war," wrote Lord Brougham, "were calculated to draw aside men's regards from the theatre, how splendid soever, of a remoter empire." ¹

¹ *Edinburgh Review*, vol. lxiii, p. 538.

CHAPTER IV

THE SUBSIDIARY ALLIANCE SYSTEM

BEFORE tracing in detail Wellesley's dealings with the Indian states, we may classify the methods by which acquisitions were made. They were three in number. First, annexation after conquest in victorious war. By this means were won the districts acquired from Tippu, Sindhia and the Raja of Berar. Secondly, the method of taking over the whole administration of a country, leaving to the ruler only his titles and royal state with a fixed revenue. This process, mediatization, as it was called, was generally carried through on the opportunity afforded either by a change in the succession, as in the case of Tanjore, Surat and the Carnatic, or on the occurrence of a minority, as in the case of Farruckabad. Thirdly, the subsidiary alliance system, by which an Indian state on certain conditions subsidized British forces for its own defence. This looked a harmless measure for the protection of native rulers ; it proved a potent system for the infiltration of British supremacy. We can distinguish four forms of the subsidiary alliance. (1) The most rudimentary form was that by which the British agreed to provide their ally with certain forces when called upon to do so and not otherwise, as, for instance, in the treaty with the Nizam of 1768. (2) The second form is when the subsidized forces were permanently maintained at the ally's expense for use at any time, but were cantoned close to the frontier, not in the ally's own territory, as, for instance, in the short-lived treaty with Sindhia of February 1804. This seems to have been the most uncommon form of the alliance, but it is

interesting to know that it had been anticipated in project at any rate by Warren Hastings, who wrote in 1778 of his proposed alliance with Berar : “ It is proposed that . . . battalions . . . shall be maintained for the government of Berar and paid by a monthly subsidy ; and that this force shall be stationed on our own frontiers ready always for immediate service.”¹ (3) Thirdly, we have the form where the army was not only permanently maintained but was stationed within the frontier of the protected power, as in the treaty with Hyderabad of 1798. (4) Fourthly, when the subsidized force was not only permanent and stationed within the ally’s territory, but also, instead of the protected ruler having to find a certain yearly sum from his general revenue for its upkeep, part of his territory was once and for all surrendered to the suzerain power. This was the final and most developed kind of subsidiary alliance, and is exemplified in the treaty with Hyderabad of 1800 and the treaty with Oudh of 1801. Wellesley did not invent the subsidiary system. It dated long before his time, but he greatly extended it, and his own particular contribution to it is the last and most elaborate form. The typical subsidiary treaty carried other important provisions. It was usually stipulated that a British Resident should be stationed in the Durbar or Court of the protected ruler ; that the latter should take no Europeans into his service, except with the consent of the British ; that negotiations with other Indian powers should not be entered upon without previous consultation with the Governor-General ; and finally, that there should be no interference in the internal affairs of the allied state. The subsidiary treaty with Mysore, as we shall see later, was characterized by two features which place it in a special category.

The advantages and disadvantages of the system are

¹ G. R. Gleig, *Memoirs of the Life of . . . Warren Hastings*. 3 vols. London, 1841, vol ii. p. 202.

not difficult to discern. As for the advantages, the system enabled the British to throw forward their military, considerably in advance of their political, frontier. As Arthur Wellesley pointed out, "the evils of war have been kept at a distance from the sources of our wealth and our power."¹ They were also enabled, without cost to themselves, to keep on a war footing considerable armies ready for instant action. "By the establishment," wrote Wellesley, "of our subsidiary forces at Hyderabad, and Poona, with the Gaikwar, Daulat Rao Sindhia and the Rana of Gohud, an efficient army of 22,000 men is stationed within the territories, or on the frontier of foreign states, and is paid by foreign subsidies. That army is constantly maintained in a state of perfect equipment, and is prepared for active service in any direction at the shortest notice. This force may be directed against any of the principal states of India, without the hazard of disturbing the tranquillity of the Company's possessions, and without requiring any considerable increase to the permanent military expenses of the government of India."² Not only then was the Company's military frontier shifted to the political frontier of its allies, but the costs of its army were largely placed upon their revenues. It was maintained, and no doubt with considerable justice, that there was less danger by this method of arousing the jealousy of European nations than by open annexation. Finally, Wellesley himself claimed that the system enabled the British government "to preserve the tranquillity of India by exercising a general control over the restless spirit of ambition and violence which is characteristic of every Asiatic government."³

¹ Lieut.-Colonel Gurwood, *The Despatches of Field-Marshal the Duke of Wellington, K.G., during his various campaigns in India*, 3 vols. Calcutta, 1840, vol. ii, p. 613.

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iv, pp. 176-7.

³ Quoted in Sir Alfred Lyall's *British Dominion in India*, London, 1907, p. 244.

But there were also disadvantages. First, it is to be feared that the subsidy demanded from Indian rulers was totally out of proportion to their revenue. In the subsidiary armies the scale of pay was lavish, and the cost of quarters and equipage high. The Duke of Wellington admitted that the subsidy of the Nawab of the Carnatic “bore so large a proportion to the revenues which the country could afford, that it was scarcely possible to realize it.”¹ In another passage he declared that, “as this subsidy is generally the whole, or nearly the whole, disposable resource of the state, it is not easy to produce it at the stipulated moment.”² It need hardly be said that these admissions coming from such a source are extremely significant. We know by sad experience that governments can never resist the temptation to spend lavishly revenues derived from their own taxpayers. When it comes to disposing of the revenues contributed by the taxpayers of other states, the results may be faintly imagined. Secondly, the system tended to bring about the internal decay of the protected state. It abolished the natural occupations, and extinguished the spirit, of the ruling, fighting, and administrative classes, and at the same time degraded and impoverished the people. Munro, a very acute and thoughtful observer, pointed out that the security of the allied state was only purchased by “the sacrifice of independence, of national character—and of whatever renders a people respectable.” The natives can aspire to nothing but “the mere animal state of thriving in peace.” Thus the inhabitants of the British Provinces “are the most abject race in India. There is perhaps no example of any conquest in which the natives have been so completely excluded from all share of the government of their country as in British India.” Again : “Wherever the subsidiary

¹ Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, p. 15.

² *Idem*, p. 476.

system is introduced, unless the reigning prince be a man of great abilities, the country will soon bear the marks of it in decaying villages and decreasing population." He suggested that the only way to make amends to the people for the miseries brought upon them by a subsidiary force was by the appointment of a Diwan (or financial officer) of Indian birth; "the great difficulty is to prevent the prince from counteracting the Diwan and the Resident from meddling too much; but when this is avoided, the Diwan may be made the most useful instrument of government." Closely allied with this objection was another, that the system supported weak and vicious rulers and deprived their subjects of the natural remedy of revolution. "The usual remedy for a bad government in India," wrote Munro, "is a quiet revolution in the Palace, or a violent one by rebellion, or foreign conquest. But the presence of a British force cuts off every chance of remedy, by supporting the prince on the throne against every foreign and domestic enemy." Munro is even inclined to deny its utility from a military point of view. He holds that the British carry on war more conveniently where it has not been introduced, as, for instance, in the wars with Tippu. "The conquest was complete because our operations were not perplexed by any subsidiary alliance with him. The simple and direct mode of conquest from without is more creditable both to our armies and to our national character, than that of dismemberment from within by the aid of a subsidiary force." ¹

Many contemporary observers, whether they regarded that fact as an advantage or disadvantage, realized that the system had a tendency to bring every state, into which it was introduced, sooner or later under the exclusive

¹ The letter from which these quotations are taken may be found in G. R. Gleig's *Life of Major-General Sir Thomas Munro* . . . 2 vols. London, 1831, vol. ii, pp. 6-11. [Quoted henceforward as Gleig, *Munro*.]

dominion of the British government. A speaker in the House of Commons declared in March 1806 : " All the native powers of India were forced to receive British garrisons, and were kept in greater subjection in their own capitals, than the Kings of Wurtemberg and Bavaria are at this moment by the Emperor of France." ¹ The treaty usually disclaimed all interference in the internal government of the state, but interference was often in practice inevitable. Munro likens the subsidiary armies to the Praetorian bands of Rome, " always ready in the neighbourhood of the capital, to dictate terms to, or to depose, the prince whom it was stationed there to defend." ² " Our policy and our arms," wrote Arthur Wellesley, " have reduced all the powers of India to the state of mere cyphers at the same time that their intriguing, discontented and rebellious followers still remained with increased causes of discontent." ³ It often happened that at the very moment the stipulation of non-interference was made, " the interference of the British government was required, and all the internal concerns of the native state submitted to its judgement, in order that its agents might see whether the cases in which its interference was called for were of a nature to justify it." ⁴

Finally, the Court of Directors, as might be expected, condemned the policy. " We are decidedly of the opinion," they wrote in 1805, " that any measures of a tendency to excite the jealousy of the native powers, or to occasion their acting in confederacy for the maintenance of their independence, which the several subsidiary engagements proposed to them evidently appear to have done, ought to have been most sedulously avoided. We are further of opinion that the late plan which has been adopted of

¹ *Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates*, vol. vi, p. 380.

² Gleig, *Munro*, vol. ii, p. 10.

³ Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, p. 471.

⁴ *Idem*, p. 6.

commuting subsidy for territorial revenue has not only been deemed highly repugnant to their feelings, but must also be considered as directly contrary to the system of policy as by law established.”¹

¹ India Office Records. *Home Series Miscellaneous*, 486, pp. 148-9.

CHAPTER V

RELATIONS WITH TIPPU OF MYSORE

THE first problem that confronted Wellesley immediately after his arrival was the hostility of Tippu Sultan. It will be remembered that three wars with Mysore had already been fought. The first war (1767-9) ended in favour of Hyder Ali. The second (1780-4), begun by Hyder Ali, who died in December 1782, was concluded by Tippu Sultan by the Treaty of Mangalore on the basis of *uti possidetis*. In the third war (1790-2) the British, after two unsuccessful campaigns, were victorious in the third. Tippu was forced to cede half his dominions, and to pay an indemnity of more than three millions. Tippu had never reconciled himself to this result. He began laboriously and consistently to build up the resources of his country. His conduct, says Malcolm, "was first marked by an honourable and unusually punctual discharge of the large sum which remained due at the conclusion of the peace to the allies. Instead of sinking under his misfortunes, he exerted all his activity to repair the ravages of war. He began to add to the fortifications of his capital—to remount his cavalry—to recruit and discipline his infantry—to punish his refractory tributaries—and to encourage the cultivation of his country, which was soon restored to its former prosperity." ¹ The occasion of the renewed trouble was as follows : In 1797 a damaged French privateer put in at Mangalore, Tippu's western port. The commander, Ripaud, a worthless and unscrupulous adventurer, represented himself as an envoy

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. i, p. 669.

from the Mauritius and asked for Tippu's help and alliance against the English. He gave a grossly exaggerated account of the forces that the Governor of Mauritius could supply. He was sent up to Seringapatam and the credulous Tippu welcomed him, though his ministers at once saw that he was an impostor and implored their master not to rely on "the agency of this compound of air and water,"¹ pointing out that from first to last his language had been that of self-interest and falsehood. But Tippu would not listen, and gave Ripaud his open patronage. The French in the pay of the Mysorean ruler elected "citizen Ripaud" as their President, hoisted the flag of the French Republic, and with Tippu's permission, and in his presence, planted a tree of Liberty. Tippu's first plan was to retain Ripaud at Seringapatam and to send another Frenchman (Pernaud) with two envoys of his own to the Mauritius. But the second Frenchman, who was equally a scoundrel, absconded with all the money entrusted to him, and finally Ripaud was commissioned, October 1797. He arrived with two Mysorean envoys at Port Louis in Mauritius on January 19, 1798. The envoys of Tippu laid before the French Governor, Malartic, their sovereign's proposals for an alliance, to drive the British out of India. Tippu began by acknowledging the sublimity of the French Republican constitution, and proclaimed his undying hatred of the English: "Happy moment! The time is come when I can deposit in the bosom of my friends, the hatred which I bear against these oppressors of the human race."² He reminded the French how he had suffered in the past through their desertion of his cause, and adjured them in the present instance to make no promises that they could not perform. He proposed that, if the English and Portuguese possessions fell into

¹ Wilks, *Mysore*, vol. iii, p. 333.

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. v. Supplement Mysore War, p. 3.

their power, the French were to retain Bombay, while he acquired Goa. But there were no armies in the Isles of France. All Malartic could do was to invite volunteers in Mauritius to come forward, including "free citizens of colour,"¹ and to send on Tippu's envoys to lay their proposals before the Directory in France. Meanwhile, with inconceivable folly and against the wishes of the envoys, he insisted on giving them a public reception, and on issuing an amazing proclamation which announced to all the world that Tippu was only waiting for French assistance "to declare war against the English, whom he ardently desires to expel from India."²

No satisfactory explanation has ever been given of this unaccountable action, which could never have had any other issue except to ruin Tippu without benefiting the French. The only possible course would have been to make a secret treaty and maintain the utmost immobility till reinforcements could arrive from Europe. One or two reasons may be suggested. Wilks supposes that Malartic was powerless in the hands of the extreme revolutionary party in Mauritius, and that the latter were as careless of practical consequences as they often were in Europe, "the obvious disadvantages of precipitating a rupture between Tippu and the English, were overpowered by the exigencies of his local situation ; by the terrors of a furious democracy, which rendered nearly nominal his [Malartic's] office of Governor-General." Wellesley suggested that his motive may have been to clear the island at all cost of the revolutionary elements in the population.³ It is also possible that Malartic was utterly careless how he ruined Tippu provided he could launch an attack of some kind at the British, though, as Wilks truly says,

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. i, pp. xi-xii.

² *Idem*, p. xi.

³ *Idem*, p. 162. He afterwards, however, modified his opinion on this point. *Idem*, p. 212.

“ the crude conception of sacrificing an unsupported ally to the hope of producing a temporary embarrassment to the common enemy ” would be fatal to any claim to sagacity.¹ At any rate, especially after Tippu’s reminder of the past and his request that no promises should be made which could not be kept, the Governor’s action was utterly callous and unprincipled.

The only result was that in April 1798 a small body of Frenchmen and half-castes, about a hundred in number, embarked on the French frigate *La Preneuse* and landed at Mangalore ; and Wellesley was thus afforded a justification, which he eagerly accepted, for the sternest measures against Tippu. The ensuing war revealed the Governor-General’s habit of thorough preparation before action and his decision to attack his foes with overwhelming and crushing force. It also revealed his determination not to let the course of the supreme government be impeded by the independent action of a subordinate presidency ; at the same time, in this particular case, he listened to the representations made to him and modified his line of action accordingly. The war obliged him to regulate and define his relations with the Nizam and the Marathas, England’s former allies in Cornwallis’s war with Mysore. In his minute of August 12, 1798,² he maintained that Tippu’s “ is a public, unqualified and unambiguous declaration of war, aggravated by an avowal, that the object of the war is neither explanation, reparation, nor security, but the total destruction of the British government in India. To affect to misunderstand an insult and injury of such a complexion would argue a consciousness either of weakness or of fear.” His original intention was to fling his forces upon Tippu, “ in this moment of his comparative weakness, of his disappointment, and of his probable

¹ Wilks, *Mysore*, vol. iii, p. 340.

² Martin, *Wellesley’s Despatches*, vol. i, p. 159 *seq.*

dejection.” The objects he determined to attain were to annex all the maritime territory still belonging to Tippu below the Ghats on the Malabar coast, to march on Seringapatam, to extort a war indemnity, to compel him to maintain a British Resident at his court and expel all Frenchmen from his dominions. With that intention he ordered the armies of Madras and Bombay to be assembled, but he soon had to recognize that immediate war was impossible. The Madras government maintained that their forces could not possibly be ready for six months. Josias Webbe, Secretary to the government, declared, “if war is inevitable, and the present are judged the most advantageous circumstances under which it can commence, I fear that our situation is bad beyond the hope of remedy”¹; while in a private letter he wrote: “I can anticipate nothing but shocking disasters from a premature attack upon Tippu in our present disabled condition, and the impeachment of Lord Mornington for his temerity.”² Even Arthur Wellesley was against making the proclamation a *casus belli*. He suggested that the document should be sent to Tippu and an explanation demanded: “there is every probability that he will deny the whole and be glad of an opportunity of getting out of the scrape. In the meantime we shall believe as much as we please, and shall be prepared against all events.”³ Since Barry Close and General Harris, who thought that Tippu should be “allowed to make the *amende* honourable if he be so inclined,”⁴ also agreed that war must be postponed, Wellesley was obliged to yield to so weighty a consensus of opinion; though he declared it was difficult to describe the pain and regret which the decision cost him.⁵ He now

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. i, p. 79.

² Torrens, p. 158.

³ Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, p. 42.

⁴ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. i, p. 65.

⁵ *Idem*, p. 190.

fell back upon the plan of reviving the former alliance with the Nizam and the Peishwa, made by Lord Cornwallis for the second Mysorean war. As regards the Nizam, he was at once successful. The result of negotiations was the dispersal of the French-trained force and the subsidiary treaty of 1798, which will be described in detail later. Overtures to the Marathas only produced the vague and unsatisfactory answer that they would execute existing arrangements. To his offers Wellesley "was surprised and disgusted to receive the unmerited return of jealousy, distrust, and evasion, . . . proofs of a system of studied neglect, of mysterious reserve and of ungenerous suspicion." Nevertheless Wellesley engaged to secure to the Peishwa an equal participation in any cessions that might be forced from Tippu, "to prove the disinterested attachment of the British government to every branch of the triple alliance." ¹ Though Wellesley had yielded to the reasoned representations of the Madras government and his military advisers as to a postponement, he had no intention of allowing them to thwart his main plans. He ordered Madras to provide 4000 men, to be offered to the Nizam as a subsidiary force, and when the Madras Council protested, he replied drastically: "This opposition I am resolved to crush; I possess sufficient powers to do so; and I will exert those powers to the extreme point of their extent, rather than suffer the smallest particle of my plans for the public service to be frustrated by such unworthy means." ²

Meanwhile Tippu was perfectly aware of what the British preparations meant. "They were," says Wilks, "the subject of" his "incessant conversation, and were recounted with a sort of quiescent distress belonging to the fatalist." ³ The Governor-General, being now fully pre-

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. i, pp. 510, 513.

² *Idem*, p. 218.

³ Wilks, *Mysore*, vol. iii, p. 373.

pared, began to ply him with letters and demands for explanations. It is possible enough that at this time he would have been placated by an absolute submission and the concession of the points he had scheduled. He began by a letter in November 1798 asking Tippu to receive Major Doveton, who should explain to him the British point of view. The letter was friendly in tone, but it warned Tippu that his dealings with the French were known. No answer was received till December 25, when the famous prevaricating account of the Mauritius incident arrived : " In this Sirkar (the gift of God) there is a mercantile tribe, who employ themselves in trading by sea and land. Their agents purchased a two-masted vessel, and having loaded her with rice, departed with a view to traffic. It happened that she went to the Mauritius, from whence 40 persons French and of a dark colour . . . came here in search of employment. Such as chose to take service were entertained and the remainder departed beyond the confines of this Sirkar." ¹ The question of receiving Doveton was burked by the pious asseveration that existing treaties were firmly established. On December 31 Wellesley came to Madras, where, as he said, he found a much improved spirit. The position of the Governor-General at the seat of a subordinate presidency must have been difficult and would perhaps have been impossible, but for the generosity and self-repression of the Governor, Lord Clive, who gave his superior, in the words of Wilks, " a manly and honourable support . . . on public principle, as warm and cordial as if it had been the undivided result of personal attachment." ² Wellesley had a few months before addressed a homily to Clive on the proper relations of the supreme to the subordinate governments in time of war. In all matters of high policy, he

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. i, p. 382.

² Wilks, *Mysore*, vol. iii, p. 396.

declared, "the duty of the other presidencies . . . consists in a cordial co-operation in the execution of that, which it is the peculiar province of the Governor-General in Council to determine," and not "to anticipate his decisions by the premature interposition of their opinions and advice. . . ." ¹ Clive's ready submission to the Governor-General was no doubt partly due to the mediocrity of his talents, of which he was himself fully conscious. Wellesley liked him, but had no great idea of his ability. In successive letters to Lord Grenville he sketches in his portrait : "he is a worthy, zealous, obedient, and gentlemanlike man, of excellent temper ; but neither of talents, knowledge, habits of business, or firmness of spirit equal to his present situation. How the Devil did he get there ?" ² Again : "Lord Clive is really happy to see me here ; there cannot be a better man, and his understanding is far beyond his reputation. But for God's sake, whatever may become of me, never send him to Bengal, if you have any share in such arrangements ; I am convinced he would ruin everything with the best intentions." ³ In January 1799 he writes : "All here is right ; Lord Clive in high spirits. I find him a very sensible man ; but he is so reserved and shy, that he is not known even to those who transact business with him every day. With me he is on the most intimate and cordial footing. His temper is admirable, and his disposition amiable to the greatest degree. All faction is fled." ⁴ Arthur Wellesley's verdict was : "He is a mild, moderate man, remarkably reserved, having a bad delivery, and apparently a heavy understanding. He certainly has been unaccustomed to consider questions of the magnitude of that now before him,

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. i, p. 231.

² *Historical MSS. Commission. Report on the MSS. of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., at Droghmore*, vol. iv, p. 387.

³ *Idem*, p. 476.

⁴ *Idem*, p. 440.

but I doubt whether he is so dull as he appears, or as people here imagine he is." ¹

On January 9, 1799, Wellesley despatched a second letter to Tippu once more calling upon him to receive Doveton, and ending with the warning : " Dangerous consequences result from the delay of arduous affairs." ² He wrote again on January 11, sending on a letter which the Ottoman Sultan had forwarded to be delivered to Tippu, warning him that the French were enemies of Islam, and protesting against the French attack on Egypt : " The further project of the French is to divide Arabia into various republics ; to attack the whole Muhammadan sect, in its religion and country ; and by a gradual progression, to extirpate all Mussulmen from the face of the earth." ³ This warning was driven home by Wellesley in his covering letter, which declared that the French, " consider all the thrones of the world, and every system of civil order and religious faith, as the sport and prey of their boundless ambition, insatiable rapine, and indiscriminate sacrilege." ⁴ Tippu's answer to the Sultan's communication was an incoherent rambling document containing a travesty of the history of the British and French in India, and maintaining that the British were the bitter enemies of all Muhammadans. The letter is steeped in a curious fanaticism recalling the diction of a British Puritan warrior-saint of the seventeenth century : " Praise be to God that the whole energy of the well-directed mind of this Labourer in the way of the Lord, on whose forehead is engraved the motto ' they dread not the terrific day of judgement,' is continually exerted to support the religion of Mahomed." ⁵ Finally, on February 13, Tippu's answer to the Governor-General was received. It was vague and

¹ Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, p. 511.

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. i, p. 400.

³ *Idem*, p. 415 footnote.

⁵ *Idem*, vol. v, supplement, pp. 24-31.

⁴ *Idem*, p. 417.

evasive, and in regard to the main point at issue it contained the oft-quoted sentence, "being frequently disposed to make excursions and hunt, I am accordingly proceeding upon a hunting excursion. You will be pleased to despatch Major Doveton, about whose coming your friendly pen has repeatedly written, slightly attended or unattended."¹ It was natural perhaps that Wellesley, unused to the dilatory and cloudy methods of Eastern diplomacy, should regard these words as a deliberate insult. He calls it a "tardy, reluctant and insidious assent," and asserted that in spite of it on February 2 a Frenchman and two Indian envoys started from Tranquebar on a mission to the Directory in Paris.² Wilks, who had special sources of information, declares: "I have been assured by those who were near him that the abrupt dictation [diction ?] was the mere effect of chagrin at the necessity of humiliation; that he really intended and earnestly wished to receive the British envoy."³ Tippu was now curtly informed that he must negotiate in future with General Harris. Wellesley's exultation in the success of his designs breaks out in a letter to Lord Grenville of February 1799: "I have had the satisfaction to succeed completely in drawing the Beast of the jungle into the toils . . . our own army is the finest which ever took the field in India; and by dint of scolding and flattering I have equipped it within a period of time perfectly astonishing to the old school."⁴

It may not be without interest to consider the reasons for Tippu's attitude. Probably he still believed the French would come to his rescue. Bonaparte had written to him from Cairo a letter dated "7th Pluviose, 7th year of the Republic one and indivisible": "You have already been

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. i, p. 434.

² *Idem.*, p. 496.

³ Wilks, *Mysore*, vol. iii, p. 383.

⁴ *Historical MSS. Commission. Report on the MSS. of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., at Droghda*, vol. iv, p. 474.

informed of my arrival on the borders of the Red Sea, with an innumerable and invincible army, full of the desire of delivering you from the iron yoke of England.”¹ Though this letter was intercepted, it is clear from the text of it that it was only one of many such communications. Again, Tippu was, no doubt, as Beveridge points out, really deceived by Wellesley’s fashion of speaking as if he and the allies were acting together. Tippu knew, at any rate, that this was not true of the Marathas, who were quite likely to join their cause with his. He may therefore have attributed equally little importance to other statements of the Governor-General. But no other explanation may be necessary than that he was plunged into a hopeless and fatalistic despair. He could not steel himself to make any further sacrifice of his already diminished territories. He resembles a sullen and huddled figure, passively awaiting the *coup de grâce* of a victorious enemy. In the vivid narrative of Wilks the form of Tippu stands out against a sombre and lurid background ; the fate-laden atmosphere is almost that of Greek tragedy.

¹ Martin, *Wellesley’s Despatches*, vol. i, p. 686.

CHAPTER VI

CONQUEST OF MYSORE CHARACTER OF TIPPU

THE campaign was brilliantly successful, and everything was over in three months. Two armies converged upon the capital. One under General Harris, in conjunction with the Nizam's army, nominally under Mir Alam but really commanded by Arthur Wellesley, marched, February 11, from Vellore on the east and entered Mysorean territory on March 5; the other under General Stuart advanced from Cannanore, February 21, up the Western Ghats from the west. The operations were simple. Tippu struck one blow at the western army and one at the eastern. Both failed, and he retired within Seringapatam. On March 6 he was repulsed at Sedaseer, forty-five miles west of the capital, with a loss of 1500 men, by part of Stuart's forces. Turning eastwards, he was defeated by Harris at Malavelly, thirty miles east of Seringapatam, with the loss of 700 men. So far, the march of the main army from the difficulties of the country had been slow, the average progress had been under five miles a day—a fact upon which Mill, in a captious desire to find fault, comments adversely—but the whole army had been conveyed right up to the walls of Seringapatam—"a direct move to the capital of an enemy, one hundred and fifty miles from your frontier, without occupying a single intermediate post."¹ The remaining operations were carried out with extreme rapidity. Tippu had expected the attack on the city to come from the northward, as in the former war, but Harris, by a "most judicious and able

¹ Wilks, *Mysore*, vol. iii, p. 417, quoting a staff officer.

movement," unexpectedly crossed the Cauvery at Sosilay, and attacked from the south-west. Tippu in despair attempted negotiations, but he revolted from the conditions offered him, which, with a time-limit of twenty-four hours, were the cession of half his dominions, an indemnity of £2,000,000, the surrender of four of his sons and four of his principal ministers as hostages. He raved, says Wilks, at "the arrogance and tyranny of the conditions . . . it was better to die like a soldier, than to live a miserable dependent on the infidels, in the list of their pensioned rajas and nabobs."¹ Seringapatam was stormed on May 4. The fighting was fierce and determined. The British lost 1164 men, the enemy 8000. Tippu was killed fighting in the breach.

No one had expected so speedy and overwhelming a success. Arthur Wellesley had given it as his opinion in January 1799 : "I am of opinion that our war cannot be successful in one campaign."² Yet within four months the formidable power, that had fought on equal terms with the British in the time of Warren Hastings for four years, and had held out against Cornwallis for three wearisome campaigns, was swept out of existence. Wellesley's elation breaks forth in his despatch to the Directors on the result : "the glory of which has never been surpassed (if it has ever been equalled), in the history of the military transactions of the British nation in India."³ Torrens, his biographer, describes his letters after the war as "pæans of triumph which might have been thought florid in a eulogistic historian, but which indited by the author and finisher of the work done in the discharge of his official duty have certainly no parallel in the chronicles of self-glorification."⁴ The verdict is too severe, but it was

¹ Wilks, *Mysore*, vol. iii, pp. 427-8.

² Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, p. 52.

³ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, p. 577.

⁴ Torrens, p. 200.

certainly a pity that Wellesley was so insistent on his own merits, and could not leave to others the task of praising and rewarding him. That, they were quite prepared to do, for both the significance of the event and the great services of the man who had brought it about were fully recognized at the time. Nothing is more remarkable than the unanimity with which Wellesley's colleagues in India attributed the victory to their chief. That this was the barest justice is clear, for, as we have seen, they had nearly all opposed the policy of the war, and if it had been a failure, the Governor-General would have had to shoulder all the blame ; but their generous acknowledgment was creditable to them and reveals a frame of mind all too rare in the thrusting rivalry of political life. "The merit," wrote Lord Clive to Dundas, "rests almost solely with the Governor-General."¹ Lord Harris, the victorious general, proclaimed his indebtedness to the masterly plans which had smoothed the path for his triumph and called upon Wellesley to come to Seringapatam and reap the fruits of the stricken field as being the only man capable of doing so to the best advantage.² "Nothing," wrote a correspondent to Sir George Colebrook, "was left to fortune that wisdom and energy could provide against, and no plans were ever followed up with more concert than his Lordship's by those to whom the execution was entrusted. . . . The empire of the East is at our feet."³ Lord Elgin wrote from Constantinople : "The period of your administration has surely been the most brilliant and has surely procured more essential benefits . . . than any government ever was so fortunate as to obtain."⁴ Even the Court of Directors were unstinting of their praise, though their encomium—no doubt designedly—hinted at the in-

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. i, p. 576.

² *Idem*, p. 575.

³ Auber, vol. ii, p. 192.

⁴ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 224.

toxicating glamour of conquest and inculcated the lesson that peace is the true object of war : “ The prospect which this brilliant achievement has afforded, of a long and uninterrupted series of tranquillity to our possessions in India, will leave our respective governments at leisure to cultivate the arts of peace, to strengthen our alliances, to meliorate the condition of our native subjects, to reduce our expenses—to lessen our debts, to augment our revenues, to improve and extend the internal commerce of India ; and, which is of the most essential importance to the Company’s prosperity at home, to increase in due time our European investments.” ¹

The question may perhaps be asked whether the war against Tippu was really justified. There has always seemed something ruthless about his end. “ The dreadful fate of Tippu Sultan,” wrote Wellesley himself, “ cannot be contemplated without emotions of pain and regret,” ² and James Mill laboured to prove that the war was unjustifiable and unnecessary.³ He holds that the danger from the French was absurdly exaggerated : “ In the state of mind by which the Governor-General, and Englishmen of his intellectual and moral caste, were at that time distinguished, the very existence of a Frenchman was a cause of alarm.” “ It is miserable,” he continues, “ to contemplate ” the revenue of Tippu, and the army maintained by it, as having been a subject of alarm “ to a people possessing the resources of the English.” Malartic’s proclamation “ was nothing but an act of boasting, bragging, folly, with something of very small importance for its foundation.” Other Indian princes had increased their French corps ; it was natural that Tippu should wish to

¹ British Museum. *Addit. MSS.* 13,393, p. 97.

² Martin, *Wellesley’s Despatches*, vol. i, p. 198.

³ James Mill, *The History of British India*. Ed. by H. H. Wilson. 10 vols. London, 1858, vol. vi, pp. 55-62. [Quoted henceforward as Mill’s *History of India*.]

do the same. He was "a braggart even among Orientals." The French Governor was a very ignorant and foolish man, and "the loose hyperbolical talk of Indians had been held forth as the momentous language of a solemn negotiation." The incident, Mill concludes, "disclosed nothing with regard to the minds of Tippu and the French, except that they were less capable of doing mischief to the English than might have been reasonably expected." To Mill's charges in general Wellesley might have replied that, if enemies of inferior strength enter into such compacts as that made between Tippu and the French, they must take the consequences. They have at any rate done all the evil they can. He does say : "whether the design was wisely or rashly conceived ; whether it has partially succeeded, or entirely failed, are questions, the solution of which in no degree affects the offensive nature of an aggression so unprovoked, and of a violation of faith so flagrant and unqualified." ¹ He had himself observed of the little force that landed at Mangalore that "few of the officers are of any experience or skill, and the privates are the refuse of the lowest class of the democratic rabble of the island" ; ² and his brother had acknowledged that the assistance which Tippu had received was "not of an extent and description to be very formidable to the British government." ³ But, as Wellesley wrote, fairly enough, "neither the measure of his hostility, nor of our right to restrain it, nor of our danger from it, are to be estimated by the amount of the force which he has actually obtained." ⁴ Above all, Wellesley could rely for his defence upon the instructions sent from home, which empowered him, if Malartic's proclamation was not proved a forgery, to attack Tippu without hostile movement on his part.

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. i, p. 171.

² *Idem*, p. 164.

³ Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, p. 8.

⁴ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. i, p. 173.

The plain truth therefore seems to be that Wellesley had as good reasons for going to war with Tippu as any statesman could desire. But we may note that his action would have appeared less equivocal and less callous if he had been able, as he originally intended, to set his forces in action at once, on the simple and sufficient ground that the proclamation was tantamount to a declaration of war. Since action had to be postponed, he was obliged to spin out the time by negotiations which did not seem to be quite *bona fide*. Thus it might seem that Tippu, after one false step, was given little opportunity to recant or make amends, and that the Governor-General swept away rather ruthlessly and cavalierly, as disingenuous and insulting, the confused and embarrassed letters written to him by his cowering victim.

The character of Tippu was perhaps unique in Oriental history. There is something laudable and pathetic in his eager desire to profit by Western science and Western political philosophy. There was seldom trace in his nature of Eastern apathy or Eastern conservatism. His mind was restless and energetic, with a half-demented restlessness and a spasmodic and fitful energy. He aimed at a complete centralization of all power and control in his own hands. "He loaded," said Barry Close, "the departments of his government with dronish Mussulmans . . . but the characteristic of his domination was to retain all power within himself."¹ He was one of the most industrious of rulers. His correspondence was voluminous and methodical, and after the capture of Seringapatam it was discovered that his letters and papers were registered in a complete and business-like form. He sent detailed instructions to all his officials on every conceivable subject, civil, military and commercial. Nothing lay outside his scope—science, medicine, religion, or manuals on military

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 38.

tactics. But almost everything he did was vitiated by a curious perverseness and by defective knowledge. Mill says with truth : " One of the most remarkable characteristics of the Sultan's mind was the want of judgement. For an Eastern prince he was full of knowledge. His mind was active, acute, and ingenious. But in the value which he set on objects, whether as means or as ends, he was almost perpetually deceived." ¹ His boasted reforms, says Wilks, were " the strange aberrations of untutored intellect, purporting to be the spontaneous effusions of superior wisdom." ² The reforms covered many fields. Tippu organized his army into five divisions and twenty-seven regiments and set up three establishments of cavalry, Regular, Volunteer and Predatory. He established in 1796 a Board of Admiralty and had planned the creation of a fleet of twenty line-of-battle ships and twenty frigates. He issued a new coinage, prohibited the sale of all alcoholic liquors within his dominions, reformed the calendar with fantastic names for months and years. He published a new scale of weights and measures. Above all, he had a passion to change the name of everything, like the Revolutionary Government of France, " exhibiting," says Wilks, " a singular coincidence, at nearly one and the same time, and in distant and unconnected quarters of the globe, between the extremes of unbridled democracy, and uncontrolled despotism ; in a system of subversion, as sweeping and indiscriminate, as if the axiom were familiarly established, that everything is wrong because it exists." ³ He embarked on some amazing commercial experiments. At one time he issued regulations prohibiting all imports and exports. But he later established a Royal Board of nine Commissioners of Trade, with seventeen foreign and thirty home factories, to carry out under

¹ Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 103.

² Wilks, *Mysore*, vol. iii, p. 256.

³ *Idem*, p. 258.

elaborate instructions an import and export trade by land and sea. He made banking and money-lending a government monopoly, and was unwise enough to promise anyone, who deposited 500 rupees in the state bank, 750 at the end of the year.

As a soldier he several times showed strategic and tactical ability—for example, in Hastings' Mysorean war against Colonel Braithwaite, against the Marathas in 1786 and in his operations against Medows; but he seems gradually to have deteriorated. His chief mistake in his later years, as noticed by Arthur Wellesley, was the failure to make good use of his cavalry. An attempt has been made to represent his character in a yet more favourable light. Mill declares that "as a domestic ruler he sustains an advantageous comparison with the greatest princes of the East"; and that his country was "the best cultivated and its population the most flourishing in India."¹ Sir John Shore also gave a surprisingly favourable verdict: "we know by experience his abilities—he has confidants and advisers, but no ministers, and inspects, superintends, and regulates himself all the details of his government . . . the peasantry of his dominions are protected, and their labours encouraged and rewarded."² He goes on to say that reports of his cruelty are exaggerated, and that he did at least secure the allegiance and respect of his own subjects: "during the contests with him, no person of character, rank or influence in his hereditary dominions, deserted his cause." It is also true that the British invaders at the time of the conquest were surprised at the flourishing condition of the country. Two officers who took a prominent part in the war, and who are first-hand authorities for the military operations, testify to this fact. "When a person," says Moor,

¹ Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 105.

² Malcolm, *History of India*, vol. ii, Appendix II, pp. lx-lxi.

“travelling through a strange country, finds it well cultivated, populous, with industrious inhabitants, cities newly founded, commerce extending, towns increasing, and everything flourishing, so as to indicate happiness, he will naturally conclude it to be under a form of government congenial to the minds of the people. This is a picture of Tippu’s country ; and this is our conclusion respecting its government.”¹ “His country,” says Dirom, “was found everywhere full of inhabitants, and apparently cultivated to the utmost extent of which the soil was capable ; while the discipline and fidelity of his troops in the field, until their last overthrow, were testimonies equally strong, of the excellent regulations which existed in his army. His government, though strict and arbitrary, was the despotism of a politic and able sovereign.”² These verdicts recorded by men, whose normal sympathies would have been pre-eminently British, ought not to be left out of account, and perhaps we may say that no Indian power which did not possess unusual sources of internal strength could have withstood the impact of three desperate wars with a European power without disintegration. On the other hand, the impartial inquirer must take cognisance of various other considerations. Thomas Munro, who spoke from actual observation, declared that the condition of the country was in reality bad. Wilks maintained that, though Tippu was not deserted by his subjects, “no human being was ever worse served or more easily deceived.”³ Finally, Tippu’s conduct towards his European prisoners and his Hindu enemies stamps him as a cruel despot and relentless persecutor. His character seems a curious compound of the pedantry of James I, the bigotry of John Knox and the savagery of Chingiz Khan. But at

¹ E. Moor, *A Narrative of the Operations of Captain Little’s Detachment*. London, 1794, p. 201.

² Dirom, *A Narrative of the Campaign in India*. . . . London, 1793, p. 249.

³ Wilks, *Mysore*, vol. iii, p. 268.

least he earns the respect due to a good hater. He was the unswerving foe of the British—"the enemy," as Lord Wellesley himself said, "whom no clemency or moderation could conciliate, and no faith could bind."¹ He never had any illusions as to the danger to Indian sovereignty from the growth of their dominions, and he never allied himself with them against any other native power. "The Sultan's thoughts," to quote the Governor-General again, "were perpetually intent upon the ruin of the British power . . . and . . . he prosecuted this unalterable purpose with all the zeal and ardour of passionate resentment and vindictive hate as well as with the steadiness of a deliberate maxim of state."² Malcolm noticed the same characteristic of a calculated and self-conscious enmity: "His conduct since the peace of 1792 has shown that though he possesses those feelings which are allowed not only to be natural, but honourable, in a humbled monarch (viz. a spirit of ambition to regain lost power and fame, and a spirit of revenge against the state that has humbled him), yet, that he pursues these objects, not with that heedless and impatient rage that characterizes a man wholly guided by his passions; but with that unremitting activity and zealous warmth which we would look for in a prince, who had come to a serious determination to endeavour by every reasonable means in his power to regain what he had lost."³

The course of purely Oriental history often appears curiously and disconcertingly haphazard. Human effort and human design seem to flicker and fade as in some unsubstantial world of dreams. Men are consistent neither to their virtues nor their vices. Such a virile purpose as Tippu's, even though it were maleficent, such constancy, though it merge into fanaticism, are not common in

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 88.

² *Idem*, p. 79.

³ *Idem*, vol. i, pp. 668-9.

Eastern rulers, and that is why, with all his dreadful faults, he stands out as one of the greatest of our adversaries ; for, in the Orient, will, purpose and personality are everything ; they cleave their way like the steel-shod prow of a great ship through the angry, turbulent but ineffective wastes of the political ocean.

CHAPTER VII

SETTLEMENT OF MYSORE AND THE IRISH MARQUISATE

AFTER the conquest came the settlement. Wellesley was almost embarrassed by his triumph. It had never occurred to him, or to anyone else, that he might have Tippu's whole kingdom to dispose of. He argued that the right of conquest entitled the Nizam and the Company, had they desired it, to retain the whole in their hands. But to have done so "would have raised such a flame both at Hyderabad and Poona as could hardly have been extinguished without another war."¹ To have divided the whole between these two parties would have aggrandized our ally beyond all bounds of discretion, and would have given great umbrage to the Marathas. To have partitioned the conquered territory into three equal portions, allotting one to the Marathas, who had taken no part in the fighting, would have been unjust to the Nizam and obviously impolitic as regards our own interests. Wellesley decided, therefore, (1) to leave intact a central kingdom of Mysore, the boundaries of which would be larger than those of the original Hindu kingdom before the aggrandizement of the usurper, Hyder Ali. If one of Tippu's sons were made ruler—a course which Purneah, the chief minister of Tippu, had advocated—"the foundations of the new settlement would have been laid in the very principles of its own dissolution."² The representative of the former dynasty therefore was to be sought out and elevated to an unexpected and long-despaired-of

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 203.

² *Idem*, p. 80.

throne. (2) To divide the bulk of what was left between the Company and the Nizam. (3) To offer as an act of grace a certain tract in the north-west to the Peishwa, although his conduct "has been such as to forfeit every claim upon the faith and justice of the Company,"¹ on condition that he should accede to the treaty and give satisfaction to the Nizam and the Company in regard to certain questions at issue between him and them on the arbitration of the Governor-General. The plan did not win universal approval. Munro wrote that he would have had no Raja of Mysore in the person of a mere child dragged forth from oblivion to be placed on a throne on which his ancestors had not sat for more than a century. He would have felt bound to give the Nizam his fair half of the territory won. He would have given the Marathas a few districts, provided they consented to fulfil their last treaty with the Nizam, but not otherwise.² But the solution actually adopted was in many ways very adroit. The conquest had been almost entirely due to the British, and it was natural that the bulk of the territory should go to them. In reality it did so ; for the kingdom of Mysore was made virtually dependent, by two special provisions in the subsidiary treaty, provisions which place this treaty in a special category so that it does not exactly fall within the four forms we have specified. First, the subsidy paid for the protecting forces could be augmented at the will of the Governor-General in Council in time of war. Secondly, the Governor-General was empowered in times of difficulty or danger to take over the whole internal administration of the country. The new state in fact was, as Thornton says, British in all things but the name : "Morington acted wisely in not making Mysore ostensibly a British

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 12.

² Gleig, *Munro*, vol. i, p. 240.

possession. He acted no less wisely in making it substantially so.”¹ To Mill it seemed that the Raja and his ministers could only be regarded as the vice-gerents at will of the Company, and he says shrewdly that setting up a Hindu Raja was a “species of screen put up to hide at once from Indian and from European eyes, the extent of aggrandizement which the British territory had received. . . . It enabled the Governor-General to dismiss Nizam Ali with a much smaller share of the prey, than would have satisfied him, had the English taken without disguise the whole of what in this manner they actually appropriated.”² Wellesley himself hardly concealed the fact that Mysore was practically to be regarded as a British possession. “Under this arrangement,” he wrote, “I trust that I shall be enabled to command the whole resources of the Raja’s territory, to improve its cultivation, to extend its commerce, and to secure the welfare of its inhabitants”; and again: “It was my determination . . . to render the Raja’s northern frontier in effect, a powerful line of our defence.”³ To Dundas, who had evidently desired the whole of Mysore, he wrote: “The present settlement is more gracious, and as effectual in real power, as that which seems to have formed the extreme point of your wishes.”⁴

Diplomatically, the offer of territory to the Peishwa was an astute move. It made it difficult for him to express any resentment with the settlement. The offer, “after vexations and illusory discussions,”⁵ was not accepted, a contingency which Wellesley had no doubt anticipated, and the territory was then divided between the Nizam, who

¹ Edward Thornton, *The History of the British Empire in India*, 6 vols. London, 1841-5, vol. iii, p. 89.

² Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 116.

³ Martin, *Wellesley’s Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 85.

⁴ *Idem*, p. 203.

⁵ *Idem*, p. 15.

THE PARTITION OF MYSORE



British acquisitions

Nizams acquisitions



Maratha acquisitions

Territory of the Rajah of Mysore

received two-thirds, and the Company, who received one-third. This again gave the desirable impression of great generosity towards an ally. The territorial gains made by the British were extremely valuable. They comprised the whole of Kanara [Canara], a strip along the western coast about 230 miles in length and 40 in breadth in its widest part ; Wynaad in the south-west ; certain Mysore territory lying south of the twelfth degree of latitude, i.e. the districts of Coimbatore and Daraporam ; two considerable tracts on the east ; not only the base of the Ghats, but the heads and forts of all the passes leading from the tableland to British possessions ; and the town and island of Seringapatam—" a tower of strength, from which we may at any time shake Hindustan to its centre, if any combination should ever be formed against our interests."¹ The capital of the new state was established at Mysore, its ancient seat. To the Nizam was given territory to the north-east adjacent to his own dominion, i.e. the district of Gooty and Gurramkonda and part of the district, but not the fort of Chitteldroog. The Nizam's government were not entirely satisfied, and their protests called down upon them Wellesley's censures on " the illiberal, rapacious, and vindictive spirit of which I have perceived so many disgusting symptoms at Hyderabad." ² The territory to the north-west lying between the northern part of Kanara and the lands ceded to the Nizam, consisting of the districts of Harponelly and Soonda, was the portion offered to the Peishwa, but ultimately divided between the Nizam and the Company.

The broad results of these acquisitions were, first, that British territory (at least as soon as the Carnatic was absorbed) stretched from sea to sea across the base of the peninsula. Secondly, that Mysore was surrounded everywhere except on the north by British territory, or the

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 38-9.

² *Idem*, p. 63.

territory of her devoted ally the Raja of Coorg ; on the north she was surrounded either by British territory or that of her ally the Nizam. When, in 1800, the Nizam's acquisitions from Mysore passed, as we shall see, by a friendly arrangement to ourselves, Mysore was entirely encircled by the *Pax Britannica*. The whole settlement was carried through with remarkable smoothness and efficiency. There was only one untoward incident, the escape of the dangerous freebooter Dhoondia Waugh from Tippu's dungeons "through the inconsiderate humanity of the British troops,"¹ and the consequent trouble caused to the administration till he was finally hunted to defeat and death by Stevenson, Arthur Wellesley and Dalrymple. "We have now proved," wrote Wellesley, "(a perfect novelty in India) that we can hunt down the lightest footed and most rapid armies as well as we can destroy heavy troops and storm strong fortifications."² "As a military, financial, and pacificatory settlement," says Dean Hutton, "the conquest of Mysore was the most brilliant success of the British power since the days of Clive."³ The reasons for this brilliant piece of administration are mainly four. First, we must set the work of the Commissioners for the affairs of Mysore, consisting of Harris, Arthur and Henry Wellesley, Kirkpatrick and Colonel Barry Close, with Munro and Malcolm as secretaries, who have been described as "the largest number of men of genius ever assembled at the same Board in India, either before or since,"⁴ and especially, perhaps, the labours of Barry Close, who became the first British Resident in Mysore and was declared by Arthur Wellesley to be "the ablest man in the diplomatic line in

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 114.

² British Museum. *Addit. MSS.* 37282, fol. 209.

³ *The Cambridge Modern History*, vol. ix, p. 723.

⁴ J. C. Marshman, *The History of India*, 2 parts, Serampore, 1867. Part II, p. 27.

India.”¹ Wellesley himself closely followed the work of the Commission and modified it in important details. Secondly, Wellesley showed wisdom and insight in appointing Purneah, Tippu’s former minister, Diwan of the new Hindu government. This created a necessary connecting-link between the old and the new administrations. We have many testimonies to Purneah’s loyalty and ability, who won the rarely given commendation (at least to men of Indian birth) of Arthur Wellesley. When the latter left India he sent Purneah his portrait and wrote : “ For six years I have been concerned in the affairs of the Mysore government, and I have contemplated with the greatest satisfaction its increasing prosperity under your administration.”² Thirdly, it is to be noted that many of the prominent Muhammadan chiefs, who might have been expected to cause trouble, had perished in the desperate fighting at Seringapatam. Fourthly, when Tippu fell, the whole government, which was essentially personal and autocratic, fell with him. It had been his uniform policy, as Wellesley noted, “ to destroy every vestige of hereditary right, established office, or territorial possession among his subjects, “ and to concentrate not only the whole authority of the state but the whole administration of government in his own person.”³ There were, therefore, no auxiliary lines of defence to be carried, when the first barrier of regal power was stormed.

The conquest was a great achievement, and no one was more firmly convinced of the fact than the Governor-General himself. We find him writing to Lord Grenville only eight days after the fall of Seringapatam : “ The event is indeed brilliant, glorious and substantially advantageous beyond my most sanguine expectations . . . and

¹ Owen, *Wellington’s Despatches*, p. 85.

² Gurwood, *The Duke of Wellington’s Indian Despatches*, vol. iii, pp. 593-4.

³ Martin, *Wellesley’s Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 73.

with all your Duncan's and Nelson's thunder sounding about you,¹ may I not venture to say to you,

Et nos tela, Pater, ferrumque haud debile dextra
Spargimus, et nostro sequitur de vulnere sanguis.

To you I shall use no disguise, but inform you plainly that the manner in which I have conducted this war has been received with exultation, and even the most unqualified admiration in India ; and (to talk like Lord Abercorn) you will gain credit by conferring some high and brilliant honour upon me immediately. The garter would be much more acceptable to me than any additional title, nor would any title be an object which should not raise me to the same rank which was given to Lord Cornwallis. Tippu Sultan fought much better and had a much more efficient army than in the last war. . . . In my conscience I believe the army fitted out under my eye, and commanded by General Harris, to be as fine as any in the world. . . . If my success at Hyderabad and at Seringapatam, accomplished within less than twelve months, be not merit, I know not what the public service is, and I cannot return to my happy indolence at home too soon.”² But ministers, being human, do not like to have their hands forced, least of all in the granting of honours, and Wellesley was only raised to the rank of Marquis in the peerage of Ireland. In his protests the outraged Governor-General surrendered every shred of dignity and self-control. On receiving the news in April he wrote with a wail of disappointment : “ I cannot conceal my anguish of mind in feeling myself bound by every sense of duty and honour to declare my bitter disappointment at the reception which the King has given to my services. . . . I

¹ The reference, of course, is to the battles of St. Vincent, February 14, and Camperdown, October 11, 1797.

² *Historical MSS. Commission. Report on the MSS. of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., at Droghmore*, vol. v, pp. 49-50.

will confess openly that as I was confident there had been nothing Irish or pinchbeck in my conduct or in its results, I felt an equal confidence that I should find nothing Irish or pinchbeck in my reward" ; ¹ and he signed the letter, in a jesting spirit of bitterness, "Morington (not having yet received my double-gilt potato)." Again he wrote to Lord Grenville in May 1800 : "Pitt, Dundas, and Bernard will tell you how I have been distressed by my Irish honours, and what their effect is likely to be here ; they will tell you that I must come home, if I am to continue an Irish Lord, and to receive no higher marks of the King's sense of my services. But I shall return in perfect good humour with myself and my friends, and exactly in a disposition to become a Buckinghamshire or Berkshire freeholder, and to remain a country gentleman to the end of my days, talking over Indian politics with Major Massacre and Mrs. Hastings, and the Major Majorum, not forgetting Major Aprorum, Rennell ; and with your speech and the votes of both houses framed over my parlour chimney. . . . Dispatch the overland express ; and for God's sake bring me home, home, home ; home first, home last, home midst." ² Five months later he writes : "I attribute all my sufferings to the disgust and indignation with which I received the first intelligence of the King's acceptance of my services, and to the agonizing humiliation with which I have since learnt the effect of my Irish honours in every quarter of India. Never was so lofty a pride so abased ; never was reward so effectually perverted to the purposes of degradation and dishonour. I will venture to assert that there does not exist a man in India who has not formed a more mean opinion of me in consequence of the honours which have

¹ *Wellesley's Papers*, vol. i, pp. 120-1.

² *Historical MSS. Commission. Report on the MSS. of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., at Droghmore*, vol. vi, pp. 209-10.

been inflicted. If I had been left untouched, my fame would have remained uninjured on its own plain simple basis ; but these false ornaments, composed of vile, despicable materials, have added nothing of splendour and destroyed all simplicity and proportion. I would give half my fortune now that my patent could be annulled. These feelings, operating on an eager temper, have very nearly brought me to my grave. . . . I have no longer any alacrity in any part of my service, on the other hand I have lost all pleasure in the prospect of returning to Europe, depreciated and disgraced, as I feel myself to be, and with the odious marks of my sovereign's contempt fixed upon my name. It is indifferent to me where my career is now to be terminated, provided it be not terminated by any act of weakness, passion or dishonour on my part. I shall therefore remain here, and I think, and perhaps hope, end my days here, endeavouring to struggle against the sufferings of my mind and body, and to shame the injustice of my country by additional service. I understand I have been sacrificed to Lord Cornwallis' reputation, or rather to the weak jealousy of his friends. . . . Do not suppose that I mean to direct these complaints against your friendship, or indeed to express a sentiment of animosity against any of my friends in the Cabinet. . . . But their strange mistake has destroyed my personal consideration, and extinguished every spark of happiness connected with public honour in my mind. *O improvidi amici, melius et amantius ille qui gladium obtulisset.*"¹

It is perhaps hardly fair to dwell upon letters written in pique, vexation and wounded vanity by a great statesman, but they are of some importance as illustrating a

¹ *Historical MSS. Commission. Report on the MSS. of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., at Drogheda*, vol. vi, pp. 336-7. *Addit. MSS.*, British Museum, 37,282, fol. 190-1.

flaw in his character which prevented him from morally attaining the highest rank ; and certainly we may consider that never before or since have honours awarded by a sovereign been so described, or roused such reflections in the recipient. The question also arises : Was his reward inadequate ? Considering that he had only been one year in India and that opportunities would probably occur of conferring upon him further distinctions, I do not think the Irish marquisate was so entirely insufficient as it appeared to be to Lord Wellesley ; but in view of the greatness of his achievement and the standards at that time observed in the granting of honours, it seems as though an English earldom, with or without the additional step in the Irish peerage, would have been a more fitting recognition of his services. What is far more surprising is that Wellesley never received any other honour from the Crown, either after the acquisition of the Carnatic, the conclusion of the Maratha war, the end of his Governor-Generalship, or the end of his life, when even the Court of Directors openly acknowledged his merits. This was no doubt partly due to opposition from the King himself. George III could never tolerate Wellesley's high claims and the semi-regal state he maintained in India. " Lord Wellesley was spoken of by his Majesty," says George Rose in his *Diaries*, " as having considerable merit in the conduct of affairs in India, but as inflated with pride, and with his own consequence ; assuming to himself the exclusive merit of all that had been done in the east, and demanding ceremonious respect much beyond what was due to his station. When he had more than once been reminded that he was exacting from those about him more than the King did, his Lordship replied, ' Then the King is wrong ; but that is no reason why I should improperly relax also.' His Majesty added, ' When he returns, his head will be quite turned, and there will be no

enduring him.' ”¹ It was also no doubt partly due to Wellesley's own continued importunity. His brother, Wellesley Pole, wrote to him some years later (September 1802) : “ Addington will no doubt attend to your suggestions as to further honours. If you will allow me to advise you, you will not say anything further on the subject to anybody, but wait and let whatever may be done come spontaneously from the Crown.”² But this is just what Wellesley would not, or could not, do ; and to the end of his life he bemoaned the fact that he had received no further promotions in the peerage. He wrote in 1827 : “ It is to be observed that I have received no reward whatever for the great Maratha war, by much the greatest service ever achieved in India, and of which the public opinion is now clear with regard to every principle of justice, policy and beneficial result. The Company has fully enjoyed every advantage obtained by that war and by the general course of my government and has left me not only unrewarded but unnoticed. It would be a positive insult to grant additional rewards and honourable distinctions to Lord Hastings and family without any symptom of just consideration for me.”³ Finally, we have two more letters just before his death showing how to the end the sense of injustice rankled in him. In August 1840 he wrote to ministers : “ Lord Wellesley submits the justice of his claim to a Dukedom of the United Kingdom, as a reward merited by public service and therefore injurious to no other person. . . . Such services as his should have an adequate record in the peerage of the United Kingdom ; and nothing inferior to the elevation which he suggests could afford such a record.” He goes on to contrast the fortunes of Lords Minto, Amherst and

¹ *Diaries and Correspondence of . . . George Rose*. Ed. by Rev. L. V. Harcourt. 2 vols. London, 1860, vol. ii, p. 165.

² *Wellesley Papers*, vol. i, p. 156.

³ *Idem*, vol. ii, p. 209.

Auckland—and the contrast is certainly telling—who had received two steps in the peerage of the United Kingdom.¹ In 1841, after the honours voted him by the Company, he wrote : “The Crown has not kept pace with the generosity of the Company, but has left the salvation of a great empire together with the firm establishment and augmentation of its vast power, dominion and unbounded resources almost without a record in the peerage and honours of the country ; and he who has saved the former and founded a new empire in the East takes rank in the British peerage with the captor of the fort of Ghazni.”²

In justice to Wellesley it should be mentioned that after the conquest of Mysore he complained almost as bitterly of the neglect of his subordinates as of himself. The refusal, he writes, to make Harris a peer of Great Britain “will prove ruinous to all spirit and zeal in this army. General Baird utterly unnoticed. Colonel Wellesley not only unnoticed but his promotion protracted so studiously, that every Intriguer here believes it to be delayed for the express purpose of thwarting me. Major Kirkpatrick, Resident at Hyderabad, unnoticed. Lt.-Colonel Kirkpatrick, my most confidential instrument in all matters relating to the native powers, dismissed by order of the Court of Directors from the office of Political Secretary. . . . All these persons I had recommended in the strongest terms to the Government of India at home. Nor to this hour can I divine a national motive for the treatment which these valuable characters have experienced excepting it be a latent jealousy of my success, and a secret desire to suppress every character and circumstance which could render its lustre more distinguished in the eyes of the public. To these I should add Lord Clive

¹ *Wellesley Papers*, vol. ii, p. 372.

² *Idem*, p. 398. The “captor” was Sir John Keane, created Baron Keane of Ghuznee and of Cappelquin.

unnoticed, Mr. Webbe of Madras dismissed. If it is to be understood that brilliant deeds achieved in India cannot cast their rays as far as St. James', public spirit, honourable ambition, bold enterprize, and laborious perseverance will vanish from the British empire." ¹

¹ British Museum. *Addit. MSS.* 37282, fol. 276-7.

CHAPTER VIII

RELATIONS WITH THE NIZAM OF HYDERABAD

OUT of the war with Tippu sprang directly a rectification of British relations with two other Indian rulers, the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Nawab of the Carnatic, or of Arcot, as he was often, though not very correctly, called. Historically and legally the Nizam was the overlord of the Deccan—that is, of all India south of the Narbada—and the representative of the Mughal Emperor; while the Nawab of the Carnatic occupied much the same relation to the Nizam as the Nizam did to the Emperor. Practically both had established territorial hereditary sovereignties, and neither ever sought from his titular suzerain anything more than a formal recognition on his accession.

Hyderabad forms the very core of the Deccan. The Nizam had been since 1768—with the exception of a short-lived period of hostility in 1780—the ally of the British. His dominions never became so completely an appanage of a British province as those of the Nawabs of Oudh or of the Carnatic ; nor did the internal government of his country—though it was far from being good or efficient—ever sink to such a pitch of baseness and ineptitude. This was perhaps partly because for some considerable time Hyderabad did not come into immediate contact with British frontiers—the Carnatic and Mysore lay between his dominions and ours as buffer states—and therefore the dissolvent force, which a Western always exercises upon an Eastern civilization, when brought into alignment with it, was neutralized or modified. Hyderabad was able all

the more effectively and safely to avail itself of British protection, because it was sheltered by this screen of weaker states from its disintegrating power. Hyderabad indeed owed its very existence to British aid. Of itself it could never have resisted the predatory instincts of the Marathas or the territorial ambitions of Tippu Sultan.

When Wellesley came out to India, our relations with the Nizam were badly strained, and there were many influences adverse to our prestige. There was a definite faction at the Nizam's court called the *Paugah* party which was anti-British, pro-French and pro-Tippu. The Nizam had suffered more than any other ruler from the non-interference policy of Sir John Shore, and he was still cherishing in sullen soreness a natural chagrin for his defeat at Kharda in 1795 at the hands of the Maratha powers. As a result of what he considered, with some justification, his abandonment by the British, he had handed over the training of his troops to French officers—"men," in Wellesley's words, "of the most virulent principles of Jacobinism."¹ The most famous of these was François Raymond, a Gascon, who had recruited, armed and disciplined a force of 14,000 men. The great danger to the British power of such forces was not limited to the military strength they brought to the protected power. They sooner or later acquired a territorial basis, for the pay of the corps was secured by the assignment of large districts which were often fortified. These French-trained armies, too, formed disintegrating centres adversely affecting the political solidarity of India, for they were largely recruited from the inhabitants of British territories or the territories of our allies, or even from deserters from our armies. Opinions among his contemporaries as to Raymond's abilities varied. Malcolm says that he was a "man of temper and conciliatory manners

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. i, p. 182.

by which he won his way to greatness.”¹ Kirkpatrick rates him less highly ; “ he would not appear,” he says, “ to be a man of vigorous mind ; or in any respect of a very decided character, and very hard and wanting liberality in pecuniary matters. . . . He has never shown himself to be much of a soldier, but he is artful, seems to have had an arranging head, and is sufficiently conciliatory in his manner towards those he has to deal with.”² Again, Wellesley wrote that he “ could never divest himself of his inherent avarice and meanness.”³ On the whole, he seems to have been a man of considerable ability ; he had won for himself a great position in the Nizam’s dominions, and it was perhaps fortunate for the British cause that he died in 1798, and that the disbandment of the Nizam’s French-trained battalions was undertaken after the power had passed to his successor Piron (whose name was often—even by contemporaries—misspelt Perron and his career thus sometimes confused with that of Sindhia’s famous general). Piron was, according to most authorities, an altogether inferior man, rougher and more violent in his political views and with far less administrative and diplomatic ability. Kirkpatrick alone seems to dissent from this judgement. “ Perron [i.e. Piron], who is his second,” he says, “ is a native of Alsace, and several years younger than his chief. He appears to be a far more enterprising and active man than the latter, and to be particularly fond of the military profession . . . I consider both Perron and Baptista as much abler men . . . than Raymond ; and should accordingly be sorry to see his command devolve on either of them.”⁴

These adverse circumstances were, however, counteracted by some that were favourable. Although the Nizam

¹ Herbert Compton, *A Particular Account of the European Military Adventurers of Hindustan*. London, 1893, p. 385.

² Martin, *Wellesley’s Despatches*, vol. i, p. 639.

³ *Idem*, p. 640.

⁴ *Idem*.

had been offended by Sir John Shore's failure to support him against the Marathas, he had been mollified by British help given him during the dangerous rebellion of his son Ali Jah. Sir John Malcolm considered that the rising of this young prince, "may be truly said to have saved the British government from the very serious evils to which it was at this crisis exposed."¹ Secondly, the success of Raymond had been too great. The Nizam was beginning to weary of his French officers and to suspect their motives. Raymond arrogated to himself in the camp almost royal rights ; he was known to be in communication with Sindhia's generals in the north. Possibly the Nizam was beginning to share Wellesley's apprehension that the French commanders in the armies of Indian powers might some day "establish the power of France in India upon the ruins of the states of Poona and of the Deccan."² Thirdly, we had a good friend in the Nizam's minister, Mir Alam, who was always urging his master to enter into an understanding with us and inculcating the principle that "it was better to be dependent upon a state whose regard to good faith was acknowledged, and whose power to protect was evident, than to be exposed to the treacherous intrigues and unlimited demands of the Marathas."³ It was on his advice, given by him to the British Resident at Poona, that the Nizam took into his service an American officer named Boyd and an Irish officer named Finglass, who raised distinct corps of sepoys to form a counterpoise to the French.

It was found that the Nizam was willing to enter into a defensive alliance against Tippu, but that the French faction stood in the way. The Nizam was eventually persuaded with the help of his minister to risk and defy their

¹ Malcolm, *History of India*, vol. i, pp. 151-2.

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. i, p. 186.

³ Malcolm, *History of India*, vol. i, p. 202.

opposition. British troops were rapidly moved to Hyderabad and the French-trained troops were disbanded with great skill and coolness by Malcolm and Kirkpatrick. "One of the great and fruitful sources," says Arthur Wellesley, "of the evils impending over us in 1798, was removed by a timely, well-contrived, and able exercise of the power of the British government."¹ "You will enjoy," writes Wellesley to Lord Grenville, "my gentle conquest of an army of 14,000 men under the command of French officers in the service of the Nizam. My despatches do not mention a curious fact, that the standard of this army was the *Tricolor Flag* ; the only one of that description erected on the continent of India. This standard has fallen into my hands ; and I shall send it home as the best comment upon the whole policy of making an effort to crush the French influence in India."² The first subsidiary treaty with Hyderabad was signed September 1, 1798.³ The subsidiary force was to be six battalions and to cost £241,710 per annum. This treaty was obviously of a temporary nature and contracted for a special purpose. It did not, as Arthur Wellesley pointed out, promise the Nizam British assistance against the Marathas. After the conquest of Mysore a closer and more binding alliance was necessary, and it was also necessary for the British to strengthen the Nizam's government ; otherwise it would in the end have had to yield to the Marathas' intention to regard Hyderabad once more as their plundering ground. Arthur Wellesley discusses three possible methods of doing this. The first was to encourage the Nizam to raise an army disciplined by European officers. But it was impossible to provide enough Englishmen for the purpose, and foreigners would prove inimical

¹ Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, p. 8.

² *Historical MSS. Commission. Report on the MSS. of J. B. Fortescue . . . at Drogheda*, vol. iv, p. 384.

³ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. i, pp. 682-5

to us. The second course was to encourage the Nizam to raise an Indian army. But this would not have secured his independence of Poona: "Thus one Maratha would have had in hands all the power from the Ganges and Indus to the frontiers of the Carnatic and Mysore; touching the Company's frontier on the whole line, and possessing the means of attacking it where he should think proper. Such a power has never appeared in India and it is to be hoped never will." Only the third method therefore was left—"to extend the basis of the treaty of September 1, 1798; to make it generally defensive against all powers; and, in fact, to take the Nizam under the protection of the British government."¹ This was the model subsidiary treaty and it deserves careful study.² The preamble declared that the Nizam and the Company "are, in fact, become one and the same in interest, policy, friendship, and honour." He was now protected against all enemies. The subsidiary force was increased. Instead of monetary contributions, the Nizam surrendered all the territories acquired from Mysore both in 1792 and 1799; thus all his share of the spoils of the victorious Mysorean wars of Cornwallis and Wellesley now passed to the Company. The Nizam further promised to enter upon no negotiations with foreign powers without consultation with the British. It was stipulated that Maratha powers desiring to be a party to the treaty should be admitted to its advantages.

This famous treaty saved Hyderabad at once from external ruin and from internal decay. States accepting subsidiary alliances were usually, as we have seen, ruined by the fact that they sooner or later fell into arrears with the sums they were called upon to pay for the upkeep of British armies. In this case no further payments

¹ Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, pp. 20-21.

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, pp. 709-14.

were required. "No future Prince of the Deccan," says Malcolm, "was likely to desire the dissolution of the connection when, by a cession of territory, he had paid in perpetuity and by advance for the services of the troops by which his dominions were protected."¹ Yet it is interesting to note that Arthur Wellesley came later to object to the final form of the subsidiary treaty just because the protected power found it unnecessary to keep up adequate military establishments of their own. "I do not object," he wrote in 1804, "to the subsidiary alliances, but I do to forming them all upon the Hyderabad model."² Inside the ring fence of British armies, protecting the state from foreign aggression, the forces of local disorder worked their will unchecked. "Conceive a country, in every village of which there are from twenty to thirty horsemen, who have been dismissed from the service of the state, and who have no means of living except by plunder. In this country there is no law, no civil government . . . no inhabitant can, or will, remain to cultivate, unless he is protected by an armed force stationed in his village. This is the outline of the state of the countries of the Peishwa and the Nizam."³ It may, however, fairly be pointed out that this evil was but temporary. As time went on these predatory and destructive free companies were broken up and hunted down.

It may naturally be asked why the Nizam did not resent the loss of this territory as bitterly as the Nawab of Oudh resented the loss of Rohilkhand and the Doab. The answer is that by a fortunate set of circumstances the territory had never been properly assimilated or administered by the Nizam's government and his treasury had never received any benefit therefrom. Again, it had

¹ Malcolm, *History of India*, vol. i, p. 244.

² Gurwood, *The Duke of Wellington's Indian Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 613.

³ *Idem*, vol. iii, p. 90.

never been part of his ancestral dominions ; it had been merely a recent gift from the Company, so that the Nizam was hardly conscious of having made a surrender. It is true that the Nizam's able minister, Mir Alam, declared to Wellesley that the treaty, "deprived the Nizam of territory, reputation, and power . . . and would at some time or other, infallibly create a division" ¹ between the two parties, but he seems to have stood alone in his view, and Arthur Wellesley claims that Mir Alam's master wished to accomplish the arrangement much more eagerly than the British government itself. However that may have been, the Company undoubtedly gained a well-defined frontier along the course of the rivers Tungabhadra and Kistna, and, as a further result, Mysore was now entirely surrounded by British territory. "You found the British influence in the Deccan gone," wrote Sir John Anstruther, "you have planted its power in the very centre of the mountains which hold India together." ²

¹ Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, p. 173.

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. v, pp. 408-9.

CHAPTER IX

THE NABOB OF ARCOT'S DEBTS

WELLESLEY next turned his attention to the Carnatic, but before we deal in detail with his action there, a preliminary chapter is necessary on the most notorious scandal of Indian administration in the eighteenth century, "the Nabob [Nawab] of Arcot's debts." It is impossible fully to understand, or adequately to justify, the Governor-General's policy, unless it is recognized that this great scandal—the legacy of former corrupt governments in Madras and of the pusillanimous connivance of the Board of Control in England—formed, as it were, the dark background of the political scene in the southern Presidency, and was still to some extent exerting its degrading influence over the ranks of the Company's service. The fact that this episode in the Company's history is generally ignored or very inadequately dealt with in the ordinary histories—whether because it is discreditable, or admittedly very difficult to understand, we need not perhaps determine—is a further reason if any is needed for devoting a chapter to it here.

The Nawab of the Carnatic, or of Arcot, as he was more often, though inaccurately, called, from the name of his capital, had long ceased to reside in that capital. He had bought land in the fishing village of Chepauk, a suburb of Madras, and built himself a magnificent palace. There he spent his time in idleness, extravagance and in lavish entertainment of English society in Madras, borrowing ready money in anticipation of the state taxes from the Company's servants at exorbitant interest, which was sometimes as high as thirty-six per cent. per annum, and

granting assignments, called *tuncaws*, on the land revenues of districts in the Carnatic. "He totally," said Burke, "sequestered himself from his country. . . . He has there continued a constant cabal with the Company's servants, from the highest to the lowest ; creating out of the ruins of the country, brilliant fortunes for those who will, and entirely destroying those who will not, be subservient to his purposes." ¹ He was not "a real potentate," but "a shadow, a dream, an incubus of oppression." ²

The money was furnished by the Company's servants, often those in quite subordinate positions, who rapidly made fortunes. But members of Council were also implicated, and it became the interest of the whole Presidency that the abuse should continue. The most typical instance of the debt-holders was Paul Benfield. He went out to India in 1764 as a civil architect and engineer, and never occupied more than an inferior position in the Company's service. Yet he amassed a fortune of more than half a million. He was dismissed from the service in 1770 for factious behaviour, readmitted in 1772, again suspended and again readmitted. He was once more suspended by the Directors in 1777, and summoned back to England ; because, when Lord Pigot, the Governor of Madras, according to the orders of the Directors, restored his dominions to the Raja of Tanjore, who had been dispossessed by the late Governor to oblige the Nawab of the Carnatic, Benfield suddenly produced large claims on the Tanjore revenues, and fomented the dissensions in Council which resulted in the arrest of Lord Pigot by his colleagues and his subsequent death in prison. Benfield, however, was for mysterious reasons acquitted by the Directors and returned to India. He was finally sent home

¹ *The Works of Edmund Burke*, Bohn's Standard Library, 6 vols. London, 1894-7, vol. iii, p. 117.

² *Idem*, p. 179.

by Lord Cornwallis in 1788, on the ground that his conduct "appeared to us far more offensive and exceptionable than that of the other gentlemen."¹ He sat in Parliament successively for Cricklade, Malmesbury and Shaftesbury, and it was said at one time that he returned by the acquisition of rotten boroughs seven or nine members to the House of Commons. He ended by losing his ill-gotten fortune in unsuccessful investments, and died in Paris in comparative poverty in 1810.

It is interesting to note that, when Lord Macartney took over the administration of the revenues of the Carnatic during the Mysorean war, Hastings proposed a plan which, had it been adopted, would have finally settled the question of the debt. He proposed, first, to deduct one-quarter from the principal; secondly, to fix a definite sum to include principal and interest up to a certain date after which interest was to cease; and thirdly, to pay off this sum by periodical instalments. The Madras government, however, would not consent—Macartney having his own plan for dealing with the business—though many of the creditors, knowing that their transactions would not bear the light, would have accepted the terms.

The scandal became so great that when Parliament came to deal with Indian affairs, it could not be overlooked. The abortive Bill of Dundas in 1783 ordered an inquiry into the "origin, nature and amount" of the Nawab's debts. Fox's India Bill in 1783, besides ordering an inquiry, would have made it unlawful for a Company's servant to have money transactions of any kind with a native power. Pitt's Act, 1784, provided that the Court of Directors should take into consideration the origin and justice of the debts and establish a fund for the discharge of such claims as shall appear justly due. Materially as these

¹ Ross, *Correspondence of . . . Marquis Cornwallis*, vol. i, p. 540.

measures differed in all other respects, yet, as Fox said truly enough, "on the subject of the Nabob of Arcot's debts, they so far coincided as to express almost the same language, the same ideas."¹ On the passing of the Act, the Directors gladly took action and drafted a despatch ordering the Madras government to hold a searching enquiry. To their anger and disappointment, the despatch was sent back to them for transmission to India altered out of all recognition by the Board of Control. The latter divided the debt into three categories : first, the Consolidated Loan of 1767 ; secondly, the Cavalry Loan ; and thirdly, the Consolidated Loan of 1777. We may note in passing that the income derived at various interests on these loans amounted to £623,000 per annum, being, as Burke said, " more than double the whole annual dividend of the East India Company, the nominal masters to the Proprietors in these funds." ²

The Consolidated Loan of 1767 amounted to £880,000. Dundas maintained that at the time it had been recognized by the Company. " Some of the ablest lawyers had given it as their opinion, that so committed were the Company upon it, that an action at common law would lie against them for the debt." ³ This Burke denied. It was at first, he said, definitely condemned, and only recognized by the Company after the debt-holders had bought votes and swamped the Court of Proprietors. Yet of course Burke does here admit a legal and technical recognition by the Company, and Dundas no doubt could hardly avoid accepting it. " I readily admit," wrote Burke, " this debt to stand the fairest of the whole ; for whatever may be my suspicions concerning part of it, I can convict it of nothing worse than the most enormous usury." ⁴ The

¹ *Parliamentary History*, vol. xxv, p. 164.

² *Burke's Works*, vol. iii, p. 131.

³ *Parliamentary History*, vol. xxv, p. 177.

⁴ *Burke's Works*, vol. iii, p. 135.

Court had already ordered a reduction of the interest to ten per cent.

The Cavalry Loan was a debt contracted to pay arrears to a regiment of horse that the Nawab had to disband. It amounted to £160,000. In the letter as amended by the Board of Control, the Court were made to say: "We cannot but acknowledge that the origin and justice both of the loan of 1767 and the loan of 1777 commonly called the Cavalry loan, appear to us clear and indisputable."

Thirdly, there was the Consolidated Loan of 1777, amounting to £2,400,000, at twelve per cent. Even the Board of Control were staggered at this debt, and admitted that "it stood upon a less favourable footing" ¹ than the other two. In the first place, it had been contracted after a stern order from the Directors had been issued forbidding their servants to have anything to do with the money matters of the Nawab and his government. Secondly, the creditors had lent their money at their own risk, for the Madras Council had declared that it was not "in any respect whatever conducted under the auspices or protection of that government." ² Thirdly, this debt was particularly injurious to the Company; for the creditors held assignment on revenues which should have gone to discharge the obligations of the Nawab to the government. It ought undoubtedly, therefore, to have been disallowed, or at any rate subjected to the most searching examination; but the Board, after admitting that they would be warranted in refusing their aid or protection to the recovery of this loan, proceeded to the extraordinary conclusion that they would extend the same protection to it as to the other two categories of debt.

Their strangely inadequate reasons for this decision were: first, the inexpediency of keeping the subject of the Nawab's debts longer afoot than was absolutely necessary;

¹ *Burke's Works*, vol. iii, p. 243.

² *Idem*, p. 244.

secondly, that the final conclusion of the business would tend to promote the general prosperity in the Carnatic ; thirdly, that the debtor had concurred with the creditor in acknowledging the justice of the debts, and that the loans had changed hands and been bought by third parties in good faith ; fourthly, that there was little ground to expect any substantial good to result from an investigation.¹ With regard to these reasons it may be said that the first two are no doubt arguments for some settlement, but certainly not for the one adopted. The third ignores altogether the notorious collusion between the Nawab and his creditors, and the fourth coolly begs the whole question. The Board made one concession of little practical value—namely, that complaints might be received against the third category of debts either from the Nawab, the Company or the creditors. They finally decided that the Nawab was to pay £480,000 annually towards the liquidation of the debts, and this sum was to be charged on the revenues of the Carnatic. “To this arrangement,” said Burke, “in favour of their servants—servants suspected of corruption and convicted of disobedience, the Directors of the East India Company were ordered to set their hands, asserting it to arise from their own conviction and opinion in flat contradiction to their recorded sentiments, their strong remonstrances and their declared sense of their duty.”² And again : “The ministry, in direct opposition to the remonstrances of the Court of Directors, have compelled that miserable enslaved body to put their hands to an order for appropriating the enormous sum of £480,000 annually, as a fund for paying to their rebellious servants a debt contracted in defiance of their clearest and most positive injunctions.”³

The Directors protested in studiously reasonable tones :

¹ *Burke's Works*, vol. iii, pp. 244-5.

² *Idem*, p. 120.

³ *Idem*, p. 165.

“ It is with extreme concern that we express a difference of opinion with your Rt. Hon. Board in this early exercise of your controlling power ; but in so novel an institution it can scarce be thought extraordinary, if the exact boundary of our respective functions and duties should not at once on either side be precisely and familiarly understood.” ¹ They went on to express their strong dissent to the appropriation of the fund for repayment. Their own claims, they held, ought to have been paramount to those of private creditors.

The Board refused to give way, but an attack was now launched upon them in Parliament. On February 28, 1785, Fox moved in the Commons for papers. Ministers resisted and Dundas attempted to defend the policy of the Board. He claimed, as has been said, that the loans of 1767 and the Cavalry Loan had been recognized and admitted by the Company ; so that, according to some of the ablest lawyers of the day, an action at common law would lie against the Company for the debt. In regard, however, to the loan of 1777 his defence appears very lame. His only point of note is that, had the creditors of 1777 been left unsecured, they would naturally have thrown themselves upon the protection of the Nawab of the Carnatic, and would “ have been the first order of creditors paid, instead of the last.” ² He pointed out that Sir Thomas Rumbold, after prosecuting an inquiry for two years with every possible alacrity, had recommended the creditors to the care of the Company. Considering the character then borne by Sir Thomas Rumbold—though there is some reason to suppose his ill reputation was partly undeserved—perhaps the less said about this argument the better ; but at any rate, Rumbold, who followed in the debate, himself condemned the action of the Board of

¹ *Burke's Works*, vol. iii, p. 248.

² *Parliamentary History*, vol. xxv, p. 178.

Control ; Dundas concluded by declaring that "the suffering the creditors of 1777 to make their claims under the limitations prescribed was the most probable mode of leading to a discovery of such claims as were not valid and justifiable." ¹

The Chairman of the East India Company stated forcibly and temperately the reasons for differing from Dundas, and then Burke rose to deliver that magnificent speech of which Lord Morley says : "Concentrated passion and exhaustive knowledge have never entered into a more formidable combination." ² He began by putting plainly the real question at issue : "Whether the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Pitt) and the Treasurer of the Navy (Dundas), acting as a Board of Control, are justified by law, or policy, in suspending the legal arrangements made by the Court of Directors, in order to transfer the public revenues to the private emolument of certain servants of the East India Company, without the inquiry into the origin and justice of their claims prescribed by an Act of Parliament." ³ The Directors had been ordered to hold an investigation. The intermeddling of ministers was a downright usurpation. His accusation is that Pitt did not dare to offend the strong Parliamentary interests of the debt-holders : "Not content with winking at these abuses, whilst he attempts to squeeze the laborious ill-paid drudges of English revenue, he lavishes in one act of corrupt prodigality, upon those who never served the public in any honest occupation at all, an annual income equal to two-thirds of the whole collection of the revenues of this kingdom." ⁴ Again : "A corrupt private interest is set up in direct opposition to the necessities of the nation. . . . A small number of slight individuals, of no

¹ *Parliamentary History*, vol. xxv, p. 179.

² John (Lord) Morley, *Burke, Men of Letters Series*. London, 1882, p. 129.

³ *Burke's Works*, vol. iii, p. 123.

⁴ *Idem*, p. 127.

consequence or situation, possessed of no lucrative offices, without any sort of trade sufficient to employ a pedlar," had in a few years or even months, "amassed treasures equal to the revenues of a respectable kingdom." ¹ For years the English people had seen the immense sums laid out by the Company's servants "in the purchase of lands, in the buying and building of houses, in the securing quiet seats in Parliament, or in the tumultuous riot of contested elections, in wandering throughout the whole range of those variegated modes of inventive prodigality, which sometimes have excited our wonder, sometimes roused our indignation."

The debt for the money which has enabled them to act thus "must be bound on the present generation in India, and entailed on their mortgaged posterity for ever—a debt of millions, in favour of a set of men, whose names, with few exceptions, are either buried in the obscurity of their origin and talents, or dragged into light by the enormity of their crimes." ² It was at any rate "not necessary that the authority of government should interpose in favour of claims, whose very foundation was a defiance of that authority, and whose object and end was its entire subversion." The question was not one, as was falsely pretended, between the Nawab of Arcot as debtor and Benfield as creditor; if it were, said Burke, who here went to the root of the matter, "I am sure I should give myself but little trouble about it. If the hoards of oppression were the fund for satisfying the claims of bribery and speculation, who would wish to interfere between such litigants? . . . But . . . the Nabob of Arcot and his creditors are not adversaries, but collusive parties . . . the whole transaction is under a false colour and false names. The litigation is not, nor ever has been, between their rapacity and his hoarded riches. No; it is between

¹ *Burke's Works*, vol. iii, pp. 129-32.

² *Idem*, p. 132.

him and them combining and confederating on one side, and the public revenues, and the miserable inhabitants of a ruined country on the other.”¹

Burke then criticized the debts in detail and effectively answered Dundas's speech. He showed how “Bond is paid by bond ; arrear is turned into new arrear ; usury engenders new usury . . . until all the revenues and all the establishments are entangled into one inextricable knot of confusion, from which they are only disengaged by being entirely destroyed.”² In some cases, according to a correspondent of Sir John Clavering, no actual money passed at all. The Nawab is generally in arrears to the Company. The Governor (the reference is to Governor Wynch's time) is on good terms with the banker, and affairs are thus managed. The Governor presses the Nawab for the amount due from him. The Nawab flies to the banker for relief. The banker engages to pay the money and the Nawab pays him interest for it at two or three per cent. per mensem till the assignments he grants on the districts mature. Matters in the meantime are so arranged between the Governor and the banker that there is no call for the money till the assignments actually become due. The interest is divided between the Governor and the banker as lawful spoil.

The plain open way, said Burke, of dealing with the debts was “to put the burden of the proof on those who make the demand.” The Board of Control should have said : “You say you have a demand of some millions on the Indian treasury ; prove that you have acted by lawful authority ; prove at least that your money has been *bona fide* advanced ; entitle yourself to my protection by the fairness and fullness of the communications you make.”³ Later in the speech, Burke put some very pertinent ques-

¹ *Burke's Works*, vol. iii, pp. 133-4.

² *Idem*, p. 145.

³ *Idem*, p. 152.

tions. If it is known that the Nawab must annually mortgage his territories to the Company's servants to pay his annual arrears, why was not the assignment or mortgage made direct to the Company itself? This would relieve the Company and pay the debt without charge of interest to the Nawab. If this course is considered too indulgent, why not take the assignment with such interest to themselves as they pay to others, i.e. eight per cent.? If it is thought advisable that the Nawab should borrow, why should not the Company itself negotiate the loan? "Instead," said Burke, "of any of these honest and obvious methods, the Company has for years kept up a show of disinterestedness and moderation, by suffering a debt to accumulate to them from the country powers without any interest at all; and at the same time have seen before their eyes, on a pretext of borrowing to pay that debt, the revenues of the country charged with an usury of 20, 24, 36 and even 48 per cent. with compound interest for the benefit of their servants." ¹

Burke then develops his charge that the acceptance of the debts by the Board of Control was really the reward paid to Paul Benfield and his associates for help given to Pitt in the general election of 1784. Pitt was interested in Parliamentary Reform, so Paul Benfield "is the grand Parliamentary Reformer." ² The settlement engineered by the Board would give Benfield an annuity of £35,520 a year charged to the public revenues, with further sums bringing up his income to £149,520. "No man can entertain a doubt of the collusion of ministers with the corrupt interest of the delinquents in India . . . the minister has paid to the avarice of Benfield the services done by Benfield's connections to his ambition." ³ Here Burke no doubt was making a permissible debating point, and,

¹ *Burke's Works*, vol. iii, p. 174.

² *Idem*, p. 185.

³ *Idem*, pp. 191-2.

though he presses the charge too far and attributes to Pitt a too deliberate and self-conscious motive, there is a residuum of truth in his allegation, for the minister was undoubtedly loth to offend the powerful Indian interest, that had helped him to pass his India Act, and therefore allowed himself to be partially blinded to the consequences of his action. Burke too, as always, has a thought for the peoples of India, who in the end have to foot the bill : “ I confess, I wish that some more feeling than I have yet observed for the sufferings of our fellow-creatures and fellow-subjects in that oppressed part of the world, had manifested itself in any one quarter of the kingdom, or in any one large description of men.” ¹ There follows a typical passage depicting in language which to some may seem even coarse in its relentless strength, but which has a splendid vigour and power, the degradation of an administration that abandons its ideals : “ It is difficult for the most wise and upright government to correct the abuses of remote, delegated power, productive of unmeasured wealth, and protected by the boldness and strength of the same ill-got riches. These abuses, full of their own wild native vigour, will grow and flourish under mere neglect. But where the supreme authority, not content with winking at the rapacity of its inferior instruments, is so shameless and corrupt as openly to give bounties and premiums for disobedience to its laws, when it will not trust to the activity of avarice in the pursuit of its own gains, when it secures public robbery by all the careful jealousy and attention with which it ought to protect property from such violence, the commonwealth then is become totally perverted from its purpose ; neither God nor man will long endure it ; nor will it long endure itself. In that case there is an unnatural infection, a pestilential taint fermenting in the constitution of society, which fever

¹ *Burke's Works*, vol. iii, p. 193.

and convulsions of some kind or other must throw off ; or in which the vital powers, worsted in an unequal struggle, are pushed back upon themselves, and, by a reversal of their whole functions, fester to gangrene, to death ; and, instead of what was but just now the delight and boast of the creation, there will be cast out in the face of the sun, a bloated, putrid, noisome carcass full of stench and poison, an offence, a horror, a lesson to the world.”¹

The fact is well known that Pitt, after a hasty and whispered consultation with Grenville, decided that no reply to the speech was necessary. The sunset splendour of Burke's rhetoric, shot with the gorgeous hues of his impassioned resentment, and chequered with the dark clouds of his prejudice, helped no doubt to obscure the large proportion of truth behind his too vivid presentment of it. We may agree that his charge against Pitt was crudely exaggerated and his analysis of the latter's motives incomplete, yet it is undoubtedly true that Pitt and Dundas were too reluctant to offend the powerful Indian interest and that this desire swayed them—perhaps unconsciously—far more than it should have done, and made them blind to the meaning of their actions. The speech, in short, was unanswered, largely because it was unanswerable.

There can indeed be little doubt that, in spite of Dundas's excuses and palliations, a serious blow was dealt by the Board of Control at the cause of pure administration in the East. If we had any doubt on the matter, it would be dissipated by the view of the question expressed by Cornwallis. He is an impartial witness, for his natural desire would have been to agree with his close friends Pitt and Dundas, yet with the sterling honesty that was typical of him he never disguised his condemnatory opinion of the whole business. On December 28, 1786, referring to a scheme of the Governor of Madras, he wrote : “ I trust

¹ *Burke's Works*, vol. iii, pp. 193-4.

you will have approved of my discouraging Campbell's plan of taking that load on the shoulders of the Company, which I think are not able to bear such a weight of iniquity." ¹ Dundas, we may suppose, must have felt some qualms of compunction when he received Cornwallis's letter of November 4, 1788, in which the latter wrote : " I never had any conversation or private correspondence with you on the subject of the Nabob of Arcot's creditors. Yet I can have no doubt that we must think alike about them, and that you only consented that their fraudulent and infamous claims should be put into any course of payment, because you could not help it." ² Dundas's answer, April 3, 1789, reads very lamely : " My prejudices were once as strong against the claims of the Nabob's private creditors as any that you can entertain, and the feelings of all my colleagues at the Board were the same ; against many of them the prejudice still remains, but from the time we examined the whole subject to the bottom, which we did in the most laborious manner, we became perfectly satisfied that every consideration of wisdom and policy suggested the propriety of the arrangement of the 9th December, 1784." ³

Cornwallis seems to have treated this perfunctory attempt at a justification with the contempt it deserved. In April 1790 he pressed upon the Directors that it should be laid down as an invariable rule, " that no private creditor of the Nabob of Arcot or the Rajah of Tanjore should ever be appointed to, or suffered to hold a share in, the Government of Fort St. George, because, exclusive of other temptations that offer to bias them against a due discharge of their duty to the public, the private interest of those creditors is frequently in direct opposition to a proper regard to national honour, and to the true interests of the

¹ Ross, *Correspondence of . . . Marquis Cornwallis*, vol. i, p. 237.

² *Idem*, p. 376.

³ *Idem*, p. 550.

Company. . . . Everything that I have heard in this country has impressed me with the strongest conviction that the whole, or by far the greater part, of the claims on the Nabob and the Raja were created by modes which have been highly injurious to the Company, and that have most essentially added to the present embarrassed state of his Highness's affairs, and I am afraid that I may truly add, that it is notorious that some of those pecuniary transactions at his Highness's durbar, have contributed to disgrace the British name both in India and Europe." ¹

The result of the deplorable policy of Pitt and Dundas was that the evil was encouraged rather than checked. The old debt was paid off in 1804 by the regular instalments of £480,000. It was then, however, discovered that since the Board of Control's liquidation scheme had been adopted, a new and enormous debt of nearly £30,000,000 had been contracted. As Joseph Hume said in 1814 : "The knowledge of the fact that Dundas had . . . admitted without any kind of inquiry the whole claims of the consolidated debt of 1777 served as a strong inducement to others to get from the Nabob obligations or bonds of any description in hopes that some future good-natured President of the Board of Control would do the same for them." ²

In 1805 a commission composed of Bengal civilians was appointed to adjudicate on the claims of the Nawab's creditors. In 1814 they gave their award on claims amounting to £20,390,570 ; of these claims only £1,346,796 were passed as valid, £19,043,774 were rejected as fraudulent. There is too much reason to suppose that only about the same proportion, namely one-twentieth, of the consolidated loan of 1777 ought to have been allowed to rank as

¹ Ross, *Correspondence of . . . Marquis Cornwallis*, vol. ii, p. 482.

² Quoted in Mill, *History of India*, vol. v, p. 22, footnote. Professor H. Dodwell informs me that the bulk of the new debt was almost certainly held by men not in the Company's service.

genuine. The commission sat till 1830, and finally, out of total claims amounting to £30,400,000, only £2,687,000 were passed. There could not have been a stronger justification of the censure passed on this vast administrative scandal by Burke and Cornwallis—the one with the passionate fervour of the orator, the other with the studious yet weighty restraint of the experienced administrator—at a time when all other statesmen conspired to minimize and conceal it.¹

¹ The question of the Nabob of Arcot's debts, lying mainly outside the Wellesley period, and the materials being very voluminous, I make no claim to have based this chapter on primary sources. All I can say is, that I have come across nothing in the Records, so far as I have read them, that conflicts with my account. I have formed my view mainly on the fact that Cornwallis's impartial opinion and the actual course of subsequent events seem generally to support Burke's condemnatory judgement. But I am fully aware that an exhaustive study of the unpublished records and contemporary pamphlets might result in some qualification of this verdict. The elucidation of this difficult technical question would form a fine subject of research for some painstaking historical student with more leisure than the author can hope for.

CHAPTER X

THE CARNATIC, TANJORE AND SURAT

A PART from the facts narrated in the last chapter, it will not be necessary to refer to the former history of the connection between the Carnatic and the East India Company prior to 1787. In that year the English concluded a treaty, by which they undertook the whole defence of the country for a subsidy of fifteen lacs of pagodas ¹ a year. It was stipulated that in time of war they should, if they thought it necessary, undertake the internal administration of the Nawab's government. They actually did so in 1790-2, during the war with Tippu, and at the end of the campaign they duly restored, though with reluctance, the conduct of affairs to the Nawab ; while at the same time the subsidy was reduced from fifteen lacs of pagodas to nine.

In 1795, on the death of the Nawab Mohammad Ali, our old *protégé* of the days of Lawrence and Clive, Lord Hobart, then Governor of Madras, tried to persuade the new ruler, Omdut-ul-Omra, to accept a modification of the existing treaty. He proposed that all the territories which were pledged as security for the pecuniary instalments, that had fallen into arrears, should be ceded to the Company. The new Nawab declined the proposal under strong secret pressure from the debt-holders, who "perplexed, plagued and intimidated him," ² and exerted all their energies to prevent a measure which would have

¹ The pagoda was a coin current in southern India equivalent at the normal rate of exchange to three and a half rupees.

² Malcolm, *History of India*, vol. i, p. 164, quoting Lord Hobart's Minute.

deprived them of all future opportunity to extend their claims upon him.

The evils of the existing relations between the Carnatic and the Company's government are well summed up by Arthur Wellesley. The English had engaged not to interfere in the internal affairs of the Nawab, but in actual practice interference was constantly necessary to ensure the very existence of the administration. The subsidy—and from such a quarter this is a very significant admission—necessarily bore so large a proportion to the revenues which the country could afford, that it was scarcely possible to realize it, so as to make the requisite payments. The result was the still further augmentation of the incubus of debt. "Here, then," adds the writer, "was established a system which tended not only to the oppression of the inhabitants of the country, to the impoverishment of the Nawab, and to the destruction of the revenues of the Carnatic, but it was carried into execution by the Company's civil and military servants, and by British subjects." ¹ The Nawab thus caused a direct divergence between the interests of the Company and the interests of their representatives in India, and obtained in the ranks of his allies an evil and unnatural support for his opposition to all reforms.

There can be no doubt that Wellesley was fully justified in his desire to cut out this festering sore, and to bring the Nawab's administration to an end. The method he employed was unfortunate, and laid him open to the charge of sophistical dealing. The facts are well known. Certain documents were found in Seringapatam which, it is claimed, proved a secret and seditious correspondence between Mohammad Ali and Omdut-ul-Omra with Tippu Sultan. "I think you will enjoy," wrote Wellesley to Lord Grenville, "the papers found at Seringapatam ;

¹ Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, p. 15.

never was there such a *trouvaille* since the King of Prussia's famous discovery at Dresden." ¹ The papers consisted of letters from the two vakeels [agents or envoys], who in 1792 accompanied to Madras the two sons of the ruler of Mysore, sent thither as hostages of their father's good behaviour ; two other letters, one from another vakeel who was sent later, and the second purporting to be from Omdut-ul-Omra himself, but signed with a fictitious name ; finally, there was found the key to the cipher employed in the correspondence. Wellesley considered that these documents established the treachery of the Nawabs, and he had the support of the Board of Control and the Court of Directors to whom the papers were sent. If any one were guilty, it would appear to have been Mohammad Ali, but the Governor-General decided in a characteristic and grandiloquent phrase that Omdut-ul-Omra had forfeited his throne by his "hostile counsels . . . modelled upon the artful example, actuated by the faithless spirit, and sanctioned by the testamentary voice of his father." ² At this point, unfortunately for Wellesley, Omdut-ul-Omra died, July 15, 1801. By his will his reputed son, Ali Hussein, succeeded, with two regents to govern for him, till he came of age. Wellesley, having already surrounded the palace with troops, launched his demand upon the new ruler, that he should surrender the administration of the Carnatic, retaining the nominal sovereignty and a liberal pension. The fact that this was done on the very day of Omdut-ul-Omra's death surely argues an inexcusable precipitancy and an almost brutal lack of feeling.

The regents refused these terms, and asked, reasonably

¹ *Historical MSS. Commission. Report on the MSS. of J. B. Fortescue . . . at Drogheda*, vol. v, p. 268.

² *Martin Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 558.

enough, to be furnished with the evidence on which the charge of treason was based. To this the British Commissioners made the amazing reply, that "the British Government had no intention of constituting itself a judge of the conduct of its ally."¹ The regents now put forward a counter project, which was almost certainly inspired by the European creditors of the Nawab, but the Commissioners declined to consider it. The latter next secured an interview with the young Prince, who at first gave, but afterwards withdrew, his assent. In spite of Lord Clive's kindly effort, who in his own words "discharged what humanity and a sense of the forlorn situation of the young man required of me,"² to make him change his mind, he insisted that in so doing he was acting on his own "deliberate clear and unalterable judgement." The Commissioners reported that "a smile of complacency, which appeared on his countenance throughout this discussion, denoted an internal satisfaction at the line of conduct he was pursuing."³ Thus repelled, the Governor-General turned to a nephew of the late Nawab, Azim-ud-daula, and made a similar offer to him. He naturally accepted, for he had nothing to lose and everything to gain by doing so; and on July 25, 1801, a treaty was made by which the whole civil and military government of the Carnatic passed to the Company on condition that the Nawab received a guaranteed pension of one-fifth of the revenues. Soon afterwards, on April 6, 1802, the deposed Prince died, but not until he had sent a protest to England through his European agents. Mill criticizes the whole episode very severely. At a time, he says, when the Governor-General and all his superiors and all his subordinates were languishing and

¹ *Papers presented to the House of Commons . . . concerning the late Nabob of the Carnatic*, 1802, p. 10. [Henceforward quoted as *Carnatic Papers*.]

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, p. 550.

³ *Carnatic Papers*, pp. 17-22.

panting for the possession of the Carnatic, the papers were found. "Nothing ever was more fortunate than such a discovery at such a time."¹ He cannot really suggest that the papers were forged, for in the first place it is inconceivable that men like Arthur Wellesley, Barry Close and Lord Clive could have lent themselves to such a proceeding, and secondly, they were not worth forging, for they prove nothing. Mill's analysis of the documents is able, and it must be admitted that he establishes his main contention. He shows that the letters of the two vakeels report to Tippu the behaviour of the Nawab of the Carnatic to his sons, when they were living in Madras. Now Cornwallis had determined to treat the two Princes with especial kindness and had urged a similar course upon the Nawab, who accordingly paid them attentions with the usual exaggerated phrases of compliment. "When all these expressions are tortured to the uttermost, nothing can be extracted from them but declarations of friendly sentiment in hyperbolical style."² The letters further contained only the vakeels' reports of what the Nawab said. It is all at second-hand. It would obviously be to their interest to gratify their master by exaggerating the warmth of these utterances. The Company's Persian translator, honestly enough, pointed out that in one of the letters a speech was attributed to Major Doveton which he could not possibly have delivered, "a circumstance which tends to weaken the validity of all their reports, and if the evidence of the Nawab's conduct rested solely upon them, the proofs might be considered as extremely defective and problematical."³ Tippu's letters to the vakeels contain only vague messages of goodwill expressed in the same flamboyant style. The key to the cipher showed that the Nawab of the Carnatic was designated the "well-wisher

¹ Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 218.

² *Idem*, p. 221.

³ *Carnatic Papers*, p. 14.

of mankind ” ; the Nizam, “ nothingness ” ; the English, “ the new-comers ” ; and the Marathas, “ the despicable.” So much for the evidence of the papers, which can only be regarded as of the most trifling character, if used as a support for the charge of treason.

An attempt was next made to extract something from witnesses. Among those examined were the two vakeels. As Mill points out, their dependence now on the British was absolute and they had every reason to say what was agreeable to their questioners. “ They lived upon a pension which they received from the British government and which it was only necessary to withhold to plunge them into the deepest abyss of human misery.” ¹ Yet those men declared that the Nawab’s expressions of goodwill to Tippu were understood by them as being vague compliments. They admitted that they exaggerated them, as they did the expressions of Cornwallis.² They reported certain pieces of intelligence conveyed by the Nawab to Tippu which seemed to be either exceedingly trifling, or sent for a good, and not an evil, purpose. Finally, the Commissioners, Webbe and Barry Close, found it unnecessary to record the evidence of the other witnesses, “ as their testimony did not establish any fact.” ³ It is indeed clear that Wellesley himself was disappointed at the results of the inquiry. “ The tendency of these examinations,” he writes, “ is of a nature in some important parts of the evidence, rather to weaken than to confirm the impression made on my mind by the written documents.” This grudging admission, however, is followed by the statement that “ in other branches of the evidence the

¹ Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 223.

² *Carnatic Papers*, p. 106. “ It was customary for the Vakeels to heighten the expressions of regard which fell from Lord Cornwallis, or the Nabob, Wallajah [an honorary title of the Nawab] or any other persons for the purpose of conciliating the mind of Tippu Sultan.”

³ Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 226.

oral testimony has served to illustrate and to strengthen the proofs afforded by the correspondence at Seringapatam," and by a long, verbose and unconvincing argument to prove that the Nawabs had been uniformly hostile to British power in India.¹

Mill's general conclusion is : " Not only does this evidence afford no proof of a criminal correspondence with Tippu . . . but the total inability of the English to produce further evidence with all the records of the Mysore government in their hands and all the living agents of it within their absolute power is a proof of the contrary." ² The plain truth is that no one, even of those who appear to justify Wellesley's action upon the evidence, has ever been able to profess a belief in it. Dr. H. H. Wilson himself in his notes on Mill allows : " It may be admitted that upon the face of the correspondence little appeared to convict the Nawabs of the Carnatic of actual treachery," though he goes on to argue, which is surely beside the mark, and incidentally begs the whole question, that they must have entertained hostile sentiments towards the British.³ Torrens, Wellesley's admirer and biographer, says roundly : " No proof of political perfidy seems to have been gleaned from the mass of rubbish found at Seringapatam." ⁴ Owen, the editor of Wellesley's despatches, is reduced to writing : " However little the papers discovered at Seringapatam may satisfy Mr. Mill's severe tests, they clearly enough proved both a technical breach of treaties, and a violation of their spirit and object." ⁵ To which the natural reply is that, in sifting evidence on which a charge of treason is based, tests can hardly be too severe.

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 516.

² Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, pp. 226-7.

³ *Idem*, p. 228, footnote.

⁴ Torrens, p. 234.

⁵ S. J. Owen, *A Selection from the Despatches, Treaties and other Papers of the Marquess Wellesley*. Oxford, 1877, p. 17.

Finally, even if the charge of treachery could be substantiated in regard to Mohammad Ali Khan and Omdut-ul-Omra, it might at least have been supposed that the claim of the latter's son and nephew to the full succession was not impaired. In the case of the son, Wellesley decided that he "has succeeded to the condition of his father, which condition was that of a public enemy," and therefore the British government might in effect "exercise its rights, founded on the faithless policy of its ally,"¹ as it pleased. This may sound a little sophistical, and it required still greater ingenuity to apply this *quasi*-medieval doctrine of attainted blood to the nephew. In regard, therefore, to the technical plea, which is the one on which Wellesley, by putting it so prominently forward, asked to be judged, Mill's comment is apposite: "If Azim-ud-daula had . . . any title whatsoever beside the arbitrary will of the English rulers, his title stood exempt from that plea of forfeiture on which the measure of dethronement was set up. It was not so much as pretended that his father, Amir-ul-Omra, had any share in the pretended criminal correspondence of the late and preceding Nawab."²

But these criticisms are only valid against a technical and legal screen which need never have been erected. It is a thousand pities that Wellesley did not in the first instance come boldly forward with the statement that the Company intended to take over the government of the Carnatic on the simple but adequate grounds, first, that the administration of the Nawab had long been a sham and an unreality; secondly, that so corrupt and incompetent an administration could be endured no longer by the power through whose too indulgent tolerance alone its very existence was possible. This course would even have satisfied

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 559.

² Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, pp. 240-1.

the censorious judgement of Mill : “ On this ground, we should have deemed the Company justified, in proportion as the feelings of millions are of more value than the feelings of an individual, in seizing the government of the Carnatic long before ; and on the same principle, we should rejoice that every inch of ground within the limits of India were subject to their sway.”¹ If Wellesley had followed the course suggested, he would not have entangled himself in unhappy controversies and he would have avoided a certain suspicion of political hypocrisy, which clings to such statements as that “ it was painful to the British Government to be compelled to expose to the world all these humiliating proofs of the ingratitude and treachery of the Nawabs.”² If technical treason were the crime, why were not proceedings taken against the Peishwa ? Tippu’s envoys were publicly received at Poona even after hostilities with the British had begun. “ I have undoubted information,” wrote William Palmer, Resident at Poona, “ of his having despatched four special messengers to the Mysore camp since he learned the death of Tippu. . . . I am told that he has declared the death of Tippu to be the loss of his right arm.”³ Yet no attempt was made to take over the government of the Maratha ruler or even to demand an explanation. Finally, if Wellesley had followed this plan, the unhappy Hussein Ali would not have been beguiled to his ruin. He fell a victim to the immaterial yet deadly toils of a legal fiction. English historians, as a rule, have curiously failed to recognize the terrible position of the unhappy boy prince and the impossible choice he was called upon to make in that hour of grief and desolation. How could he do anything else than follow the advice given to him by the regents—the

¹ Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 232.

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 558.

³ India Office Records, *Home Series, Miscellaneous*, 482, p. 529.

men whom he knew and trusted, the men whom his father had appointed to guide and control him ? To him the real limits of his power were a sealed book. He could know nothing of the might and majesty of England. The regents would tell him that he must defend the honour and the possessions of his House ; that proposals similar to this had been rejected without disaster to themselves, by Mohammad Ali and Omdut-ul-Omra himself ; that the threats of Lord Wellesley were mere diplomatic manœuvrings for position, and that, if necessary, he could at a later stage in the negotiations go some way to meet his adversary ; that to begin his reign by the surrender of the inheritance which his ancestors had bequeathed to him would dishonour him for ever in the eyes of his people and his fellow princes. He should never have been confronted with the awful alternative of deciding whether he should defy the advice of all those whom he had been taught to respect and obey, or yield to threats which he probably did not understand, and in the validity of which he could scarcely believe. As regards the regents too, there is no lack of reason and dignity, if also some naïvety, in the reply they made to Lord Wellesley's demand : " We who are charged with the care of the country, and the affairs of the Heir, have no authority to engage in such disaffection and faithlessness, as to deliver up unconditionally the whole rights and property of our master, to commit him and his family, in a state of want and subjection, to the Company. We cannot therefore comprehend the substance and meaning of your demand. More than that, it occurs to us that you have proposed a heavy demand to us, in the first instance under the idea that it might be diminished at future conferences ; and that you might ascertain our sentiments touching a fresh agreement for renewing the friendship and union that has so long subsisted between the Company and the Nabob of

the Carnatic.”¹ It is perhaps no wonder that even Dr. Horace Wilson, Wellesley’s stalwart champion, as he contemplates this episode, is constrained rather sadly to admit : “ The inconsistencies and unsoundness of many of our attempts to vindicate our political measures in India are undeniable. It would have been more honest and honourable to have confined ourselves to the avowal that the maintenance of British dominion in India was the mainspring of all our policy.”²

In two other cases, Tanjore and Surat, Wellesley forced the Indian rulers definitely to surrender their administration to the Company and accept empty titles with guaranteed pensions. In both cases the countries were greatly benefited ; in both the British had long held the reality of power ; in neither was too much regard paid to the feelings of the ruling House, conditions being dictated to new princes at the moment of their succession.

The state of Tanjore in the extreme south-east of the peninsula was founded by Shahji, the father of Sivaji. The history of our connection with the country had not, on the face of it, been particularly creditable either to our statesmanship or our good faith. In 1762 we had guaranteed the integrity of its territory. In 1773 the Madras government had followed this up by deposing the Raja, to oblige our ally, Mohammad Ali of the Carnatic—an achievement for which Governor Wynch was very properly dismissed. The Raja was restored by Lord Pigot in 1776. The restoration was in accordance with orders from home, but it was contrary to the interests of the servants of the Company in Madras, who arrested the Governor and thus caused his death from mental distress and the rigours of the confinement. Tanjore had been embraced in the devastating coils of the “ Nabob of Arcot’s ” debts, and

¹ *Carnatic Papers*, p. 16.

² Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 231, footnote.

Paul Benfield did not shrink from putting forward claims for £160,000 on the revenue, and £72,000 on the growing crops.

In 1786 there was a vacancy in the succession through death. The candidates for the throne were the late Raja's half-brother, Amir Sing, and his adopted son, Serfogi. Amir Sing was a man of evil and unbalanced character, probably trembling on the verge of insanity. Serfogi had been placed under the tutelage of the famous missionary Schwartz, and had received a Western education. He was of an unusually attractive disposition. Bishop Heber describes him as gifted and accomplished, well read in French and English literature, able to appreciate the fine distinctions of Shakespearean characters and to write English verse. The Madras government had referred the succession question to the learned men, or pundits, of Tanjore, who declared for Amir Sing. His reign proved calamitous in every way, and Cornwallis resubmitted the problem to the scholars of Benares and Calcutta. Their decision, very conveniently, went in favour of Serfogi. The Directors, on Sir John Shore's advice, determined to recognize him, but nothing definite had yet been done when Wellesley appeared in India. He promptly determined not only to carry out the Directors' recommendation but to avail himself of the opportunity to sweep away another Indian state. "The difficulties," he writes, "which I encountered in obtaining a correct and consistent account of Tanjore, are scarcely to be described or imagined. After a most tedious inquiry, I brought the several contending parties to a fair discussion (or rather to a bitter contest) in my presence." In the end, to employ the Governor-General's euphemistic phraseology, "the contending parties unanimously concurred in the expediency and justice of the treaty"¹ that he was urging

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 247.

upon them. Serfogi on October 25, 1799, agreed to resign the whole civil and military administration, in return for a pension of £40,000 a year.

The case of Surat had some peculiar features, and enabled Wellesley, as Mill says, to enunciate a new principle, which was that, when the Company succeeded to the power of the Mughal empire, it could, if unrestricted by any specific treaty, dispose, as it thought proper, of any claim to a rulership originally owning allegiance to the throne of Delhi. Surat had great historical traditions, for it was the first permanent settlement of the Company on the mainland of India, and it remained our chief station down to 1687. It was, besides, the Muhammadan port of embarkation for Mecca, the pilgrim gate of India ; and it was possibly at this time, as Mill believes, the largest city in the peninsula. Since 1759 the Nawab, while retaining the civil administration, had handed over the defence of the castle to the Company on behalf of the Emperor. The Company, therefore, in Surat, was in fact the vice-gerent of Shah Alam ; and the castle, and the Company's principal frigate on the station, flew his ensign.

As might have been expected, the English soon found that the Nawab's administration was not contributing enough from the revenues to meet the charges for defence. The question of ending an unreal and unsatisfactory position had arisen in Cornwallis' time. On the death of a former Nawab in 1790, the Bombay government suggested that either the office of Nawab should be abolished and a *Sannad* (i.e. patent) obtained from the Emperor, to invest the Company with the administration and the revenues of Surat ; or that the Company should make certain terms with the new ruler. Cornwallis, however, characteristically preferred not to interfere, his motives being first a punctilious regard for the right of inheritance of Indian princes, and secondly a disinclination "to lay

much stress on a *Sannad* from the King (i.e. Emperor) as a formal acknowledgement of its validity might be turned to the disadvantage of the Company upon some other occasion.”¹

In 1797, however, demands were put forward that part of the disorderly native forces should be disbanded, and funds assigned for British battalions. After two years' negotiations the Nawab agreed to make certain concessions, but he died January 8, 1799. His brother claimed the succession, but the conditions were imposed that a judicature should be established at Surat and that moneys for the expenses of the garrison should be paid to the Company. The claimant to the throne, whose right was indisputable, would only offer a lac of rupees, and Seton, the Resident, wrote : “ I am convinced he has not the means or I believe he would really pay more.”² But Wellesley drastically cut short all further dispute. He ordered the whole administration to be taken over by the Company, and the Nawab to be pensioned off on condition of receiving one lac of rupees annually with the addition of one-fifth of the surplus, after the expenses of the defence were met. The procedure was certainly high-handed. “ The whole proceeding,” says Beveridge, “ was characterized by tyranny and injustice.”³ Mill pronounces Wellesley's action to have been “ the most unceremonious act of dethronement which the English had yet performed as the victim was the weakest and most obscure.”⁴ The truth is that the Governor-General could not bring himself, now that the substance of power had passed to the Company, to maintain in operation an agreement nearly fifty years old, which no longer fitted the facts.

¹ Ross, *Correspondence of . . . Marquis Cornwallis*, vol. ii, p. 22.

² Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 207.

³ H. Beveridge, *A Comprehensive History of India . . .* 3 vols. London, 1867, vol. ii, p. 717.

⁴ Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 208.

Duncan, Governor of Bombay, who carried out the change, did not agree with the policy of the Governor-General ; but he wrote afterwards in 1806, when the incident was being attacked in Parliament : “ I will add in justice to Lord Wellesley, that the prospect of future tranquillity to the town of Surat (containing nearly half a million of souls) has been fully realized since this change of its government ; and, as that was one of his Lordship’s leading views in ordering it, he is entitled to have the praise of this political foresight.”

CHAPTER XI

THE COERCION OF OUDH

WE next have to turn to Wellesley's dealings with Oudh—the part of his governor-generalship which has brought upon him more criticism than any other. A brief recapitulation of our previous history in relation to that country is necessary. Oudh lies along the north-western frontier of Bengal, and forms part of the great alluvial plain of northern India. Protected by the mountains, Oudh has a humid climate and is clothed with luxurious vegetation. Originally it had an area of about 24,000 square miles and a population probably of six or seven millions. We had first come into close relationship with it in 1764. In that year the ruler of the country, known as the Nawab Vizier, because he was nominally the hereditary chief minister of the Mughal Empire, marched with his ally and overlord, Shah Alam, to invade Bengal. He was utterly defeated by Hector Munro at the Battle of Buxar ; British troops marched into Lucknow, and all Oudh was at their mercy. The Battle of Buxar naturally struck the imagination of the Indian world, for it meant that the Mughal Emperor himself, supported by his greatest minister, lay prostrate before the victorious armies of the mercantile state which had hitherto seemed to hold a merely peaceful and precarious position on the maritime frontiers of the Empire. Lord Clive, coming out to India for the second time as Governor of Bengal, found he had to deal with the results of this stricken field. He curbed the promptings of imperial ambition which fired the minds of some of his colleagues, and restored to the Nawab his justly-forfeited dominions, with the exception of the districts of Kora and Allahabad. These districts

he handed over to the Emperor, to enable him to maintain some vestige of his former splendour. Clive further engaged to furnish the Nawab of Oudh with British troops, if he were ever in any need of defence for his territory—an undertaking which was the germ of all subsequent subsidiary alliance treaties. In 1773 Warren Hastings sold back Kora and Allahabad to the Nawab in return for 50 lacs and a permanent subsidy for a garrison of the Company's troops. After the Rohilla war in 1774, Rohilkhand was incorporated into the dominions of the Nawab, and thereby a territory of 12,000 square miles with a population of about three millions was added to his possessions. In January 1775, on the death of the reigning Nawab, a new treaty was forced upon his successor by the anti-Hastings majority in the Council, which increased the subsidy to be paid for British troops, and obliged him to surrender to the Company the sovereignty of Benares. We need say nothing here of the famous story of Hastings exactions upon the Begams, or Princesses, of Oudh ; nor of his attempts in his last year of office to reorganize and re-establish the finances of the country, which had long occupied, in respect to the British in Bengal, the same position that the Irish establishment occupied at home in relation to the British Government. The English looked upon Oudh as a stalking-horse for their financial requisitions ; and it is probable that at the end of Hastings' administration the country was being drained of the maximum tribute which it could afford. In the time of Cornwallis the Nawab petitioned to be relieved of the expense of the British troops in his dominions. They now consisted of a permanent brigade stationed at Cawnpore and an additional force known as the "Temporary Brigade," which since 1777 had been quartered at Fatehgarh. The Nawab had on two occasions, in 1781 and 1784, already appealed for the Temporary Brigade to be

recalled. Hastings had twice agreed to do so, but on both occasions his Council overruled him. Cornwallis once more reviewed the whole problem, and though he found himself unable to accept the Nawab's proposal, he at least reduced the subsidies, which now amounted to a nominal seventy-five, and an actual eighty-four, lacs a year, to fifty. In 1797 Sir John Shore intervened in a disputed succession in Oudh, raised Saadat Ali to the throne and made a new treaty by which the Company became responsible for the whole defence of Oudh, in return for the annual tribute of seventy-six lacs, or £760,000. The fort of Allahabad was ceded to the Company, because it was, as Marshman says, the military key of the province. The seventh clause of the treaty was to the effect that there was to be no increase in the subsidy except in case of necessity, and then only in proportion to, and contemporary with, the necessity. The seventeenth article granted the Nawab full authority over his household affairs, hereditary dominions, troops and subjects. The last two clauses are specially important in view of Wellesley's policy, which we are about to describe. For the moment it is sufficient to note that from the point of view of the Nawab there was a dangerous latitude in the words of the seventh clause, for it was apparently implied that the Governor-General was to be judge of the necessity, which would render it desirable to increase the subsidiary force.

Such was then the position of Oudh, historically considered, on Wellesley's accession to office. The internal condition of the country was, on the best evidence available, deplorable. The administration was a byword for inefficiency, corruption and oppression. Behind the all too powerful screen of British bayonets, guarding the frontiers and eliminating the need for any national and patriotic vigour, the energies—not too strong in any case—of the Muhammadan government rapidly decayed. Com-

mercially, the country was the prey of European adventurers, whose activities were a continual annoyance to the authorities in Calcutta. "It is worthy of remark," says the historian Thornton, "that an ill-governed Indian state is precisely the place which a disreputable class of Europeans find the most suitable for the exercise of their talents." ¹

It is evident from all this that the condition of Oudh formed just the kind of problem that would challenge every instinct and every aspiration of Lord Wellesley. The incompetency and corruption of the Government, the embarrassment caused by the worthless class of European merchants, and finally, let us not forget, the miseries that such a *régime* inflicted on the toiling peasantry of Oudh, all clamoured for correction and redress. Unfortunately, when he came to closer grips with these problems, Wellesley found his path barred and impeded by several special circumstances. Nawabs of Oudh had recently combined an appalling administrative incapacity with a complete loyalty to the British Government. They clung to their suzerain with an embarrassing and compromising fidelity. It was quite impossible to bring against them, as against the Nawabs of the Carnatic, any charge of treason or insubordination. Secondly, the instalments of the subsidy, at whatever cost, had always been punctually paid. Thirdly, it was quite obvious that even the present subsidy was a very heavy proportion of the total revenue of the country to pay for the garrison of a foreign power.

Yet Wellesley was constrained to begin his campaign of reform by demanding that the Company's forces in Oudh should be still further increased; and that the Nawab's own army, which was entirely undisciplined, inefficient, and formidable only to its leaders, should be diminished. This would mean that the present subsidy

¹ Thornton, *History of British India*, vol. iii, p. 162.

would be increased by half a million sterling, bringing up the whole to a sum of £1,260,000, an amount which, however necessary, can only be regarded as a terrible drain on the revenues of the country. The pretext for this demand was the danger from Zeman Shah, ruler of Afghanistan, who in 1798 had suddenly launched upon the Nawab of Oudh and the East India Company an ultimatum that they should assist him to restore Shah Alam, the Emperor, to power. His words were provocative and insolent enough : " that he should consider our not joining his royal standard, and our not assisting him in the restoration of Shah Alam, and in the total expulsion of the Marathas, in the light of an act of disobedience and enmity." ¹

To what, it may be asked, did the threat from Zeman Shah exactly amount ? He ascended the throne in 1792. In 1796 he advanced to Lahore with 33,000 men—an action which, as was natural, vividly recalled to all the powers of the sub-continent, Indian and European alike, those tremendous and catastrophic invasions which in the past had devastated the whole of the northern plains. But the peril quickly disappeared. His brother, Shah Muhammad, was causing trouble in Afghanistan, and Zeman Shah therefore retired from Lahore in 1797. At the end of 1798 he again advanced, but after outraging the Governor-General by the summons we have quoted, he again retreated in January 1799 ; for the Shah of Persia, urged thereto by the British Muhammadan agent, Mehdi Ali Khan, had instigated his treacherous brother once more to rise in insurrection.² This was the end of danger from Zeman Shah, for in 1800 he was dethroned by his brother, blinded and imprisoned. The crisis did not pass away without some reverberations in international policy. The Director Sullivan suggested to

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. i, p. 262.

² *Idem*, pp. 428, 433.

Dundas that an alliance might possibly be made with Russia to counteract Zeman Shah. The latter handed on the suggestion to Lord Grenville, who in his reply practically anticipated the famous advice of Lord Salisbury to the diplomatists of his day, that they should use large-scale maps. "In my apprehension," he wrote, "the making such a proposal at Petersburg as Mr. Sullivan suggests, would only tend to give that court a persuasion that we are dependent upon them in a quarter where nature has separated us by limits more insuperable than the *Oceanus dissociabilis* which Horace speaks of. If I am wrong, no one is more able to set me right than yourself, but do it, if you please, with a map in your hand, and with a calculation of distances, a reference to history, and a consideration of the present state of intervening countries between Petersburg and Calcutta." ¹

In 1798 the military authorities were rightly much exercised by the crisis. The modern north-west frontier question now for the first time loomed up before the British in India. "It is singularly unfortunate," wrote Sir J. H. Craig, commander-in-chief, "and surely much to be regretted, that in the thirty odd years that we may be said to have been in possession of this country, it has, I should suppose, never been considered in a military point of view as being within the possibilities of attack." ² He went on to propose that we should defend the north-west frontier in alliance with Sindhia with 20,000 men at a point a hundred miles north-west of Delhi. He did not believe that the Sikhs, who had been often looked upon vaguely as an outward rim of defence, would offer any effective opposition. The Marathas at Delhi were quarrelling fiercely among themselves. The Nawab of

¹ *Historical MSS. Commission. MSS. of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., at Droghmore*, vol. iv, p. 319.

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. i, p. 278.

Oudh's own troops were not only useless but dangerous : " I should be almost as unwilling to leave them behind me as I should be to leave a fortress of the enemy." ¹ Lord Wellesley, for practical reasons, had to discard this ambitious scheme of a far-flung battle line ; he fell back on the determination largely to increase the British army in Oudh ; and hence the new demand which was now laid before the Nawab. However we look upon it, this policy seems to require some justification. We need lay no stress on the fact that danger from Zeman Shah was, as we have shown, in reality non-existent. That could not have been known at the time, and Wellesley was bound not to underrate his enemy. A more pertinent criticism is that Wellesley was demanding that the East India Company should be paid to keep up such a force " as shall at all times be adequate to your effectual protection, independently of any reinforcement which the exigency might otherwise require." ² The question is, had the British any right to force their ally, already financially distressed, to bear the cost of such counsels of perfection ? Ought they not to have strained every nerve to bear the greater part of the cost themselves ? James Mill passes four criticisms, which it must be admitted cannot very easily be met. He says, first, that the demand meant that the military force ought to be, even in profound peace, at the utmost extent of a war establishment, " than which a more monstrous proposition never issued from human organ." Secondly, it was unnecessary ; the Afghans were so far away that this suggestion is only " matched by a proposition for a perpetual war establishment in England for fear of an invasion from the Turks." Thirdly, whether justified or not, this demand, euphemistically called a reform of the Oudh military system, practically meant " the total annihilation of the Nawab's military power and

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. i, p. 301.

² *Idem*, vol. ii, p. 134.

the resignation of himself and his country to the army of another state." Fourthly, the treaty of Sir John Shore, which governed our relations with Oudh, allowed, at the most, occasional augmentations of the army ; but these increases were to be permanent. "Such is the logic," comments Mill, "of the strong man towards the weak." ¹

When Wellesley's demands were laid before the Nawab, that ruler first assented, and then withdrew his assent. Before anything further could be done, there came on December 12, 1799, the offer of the Nawab to abdicate—an interlude which for the moment diverted attention from the main question of the military reforms. Wellesley distinctly affirmed that the Nawab made the offer to abdicate of his own accord : "before the Resident at Lucknow could open the proposed negotiations . . . or had disclosed to him any part of my intending plans." He repeats the asseveration emphatically in the next paragraph ; but admits a little later that the "necessity of a reform of the Vizier's military establishments had been for a considerable time under discussion" ² between the Vizier and himself—a statement which obviously takes away any particular force from the point which he had just made. When the Resident received the Nawab's proposal of abdication, he first made some suitable remonstrances and then conveyed the decision to Wellesley, who promptly replied that the proposal "is pregnant with such benefit not only to the Company but to the inhabitants of Oudh, that his lordship thinks it cannot be too much encouraged." ³ In the same spirit he informs the Director that "it is my intention to profit by the event to the utmost practical extent." ⁴ At the same time he evidently had some inkling of the trouble that actually

¹ Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, pp. 142-3.

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, pp. 155-6.

³ *Idem*, p. 156.

⁴ *Idem*.

afterwards occurred, for he proposed to the Resident that the abdication should be carried out not by a formal act on the part of the Nawab, which by "raising a question with regard to the succession, would involve us in some embarrassment," but by a secret treaty; and that the sons of the Nawab should be no further mentioned "than may be necessary for the purpose of securing to them a suitable provision."¹ This amazingly cool proposal naturally failed. The Nawab, if serious at all in his offer to abdicate, which may well be doubted, had of course meant that his sons should succeed him, and it seems difficult to understand how Wellesley could ever have imagined that he intended anything else. There was the less excuse because in making the original offer the Nawab had added "that as one of his sons would be exalted to the *Masnad*, his name would remain."² When the treaty was submitted, the Nawab, after perusing it, asked to be informed what powers were to remain with his successor, and he was then brusquely told "that the plan did not provide for a successor."³ He thereupon claimed the right to nominate an heir, and, when the English Resident remained obdurate, he formally withdrew his offer of abdication. The Governor-General then opened the vials of his wrath and professed himself "extremely disgusted at the duplicity and insincerity of the Nawab."⁴ We can hardly be surprised when Mill says: "The vivacity of the Governor-General in the pursuit of his object was far too great,"⁵ for it was certain from the beginning that the Nawab would revolt against his proposition. Mill himself suggests that Wellesley should have gone to Lucknow him-

¹ *Papers presented to the House of Commons, pursuant to their order of the 25th and 28th of June, 1805, relating to East India Affairs.* 1806. [Henceforward quoted as *Oudh Papers*.] No. 3, p. 31.

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 146.

³ *Oudh Papers*, No. 3, p. 53.

⁴ *Idem*, p. 67.

⁵ Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 150.

self to overawe his ally and should have allowed at least the externals of royalty to his son.

Wellesley now launched a crushing despatch at the unfortunate Nawab. "My duty," he said, "compels me" to communicate to you, in the most unqualified terms, the astonishment, regret and indignation which your recent conduct has excited in my mind."¹ He announced that, even if the question of the abdication were closed, the military reforms were still necessary. In this matter the Nawab was allowed no further protest. Troops were ordered to march into Oudh and he was simply ordered to find money for paying them. He protested, but was told that the troops could not be stopped, though he might present reasoned objections, to which he replied, not without dignity: "If the measure was to be carried into execution, whether with or without his approbation, there was no occasion for consulting him."² He did, however, on consideration, present further remonstrances in which he pointed out in the first place that, by the disbanding of his own army, thousands of his own subjects would be deprived of subsistence, while the disbanded troops would be the centre of commotions and disturbance. Secondly, that under Sir John Shore's treaty there was to be no further increase in the British forces except in case of necessity, and the increase was to be temporary and proportionate to the necessity. Thirdly, that the treaty guaranteed him full authority in internal matters, but that it was impossible for him to exercise that authority if he were deprived of the army.

Wellesley, naturally enough, did not find it easy to meet these moderate and reasonable protests. He fell back rather ineffectively upon a point of formality, declaring that the paper on which they were written had not

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, pp. 208-9.

² *Oudh Papers*, No. 3, p. 73.

been properly attested by seal and signature, which, "besides indicating a levity totally unsuitable to the occasion, is highly deficient in the respect due to the first British Authority in India." But he added that, if "in formally answering his lordship's letter, his Excellency should think proper to impeach the honour and justice of the British Government in similar terms . . . the Governor-General would consider how such unfounded calumnies and gross misrepresentations both of facts and arguments deserve to be noticed." ¹ It is difficult to criticize too severely the pomposity, lack of humour and cruelty of this despatch. The words above quoted are surely an astonishing description of a respectful and entirely reasonable remonstrance, humbly pointing out that there is an apparent inconsistency between the conduct of the suzerain power and the treaty that governs its relation with the protected state. As Mill truly says: "This protest is represented as an impeachment of British honour and justice, and, if no guilt existed before to form a ground for punishing the party who declines compliance with their will, a guilt is now contracted which hardly any punishment can expiate." ² When the Nawab still attempted some feeble objections, he was roughly told that perseverance in so dangerous a course would leave no alternative than that of considering all amicable engagements between him and the Company at an end. The unfortunate man now yielded, and the subsidy was paid. It is perhaps as well for the credit of British diplomacy that methods of this kind are not often employed. Mill's strictures on the whole proceeding cannot be said to be undeserved. "If the party injured," he says, "submits . . . his consent is alleged. If he complains, he is treated as impeaching the honour and justice of his superior; a crime of so prodigious a magnitude as to set

¹ *Oudh Papers*, No. 3, p. 89.

² Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 155.

the superior above all obligations to such a worthless connection.”¹

The other part of the Governor-General's policy was now carried out and the Nawab's own troops were disbanded. In this Wellesley showed his better and kinder side. He insisted on discharging all arrears of pay to the troops. The operation was performed without bloodshed or commotion. Everything was done that was possible to assuage the feelings and satisfy the aspirations of the officers and soldiers who were thus dismissed. As Mill says with equal truth and insight : “ It was the disposition, and the principle of the Governor-General, to treat with generosity the individuals upon whom the measures of his Government might heavily press.”²

Unfortunately, Wellesley was not even yet satisfied. His real desire was to force upon the Nawab a cession of territory in lieu of revenue payments, which should complete the subsidiary treaty after his own favourite pattern ; and he therefore decided in 1801, apparently without any pretence that the situation had altered, that the “ Vizier must now be prepared for the active and decided interference of the British Government in the affairs of his country.”³ Accordingly, on February 16 the Nawab was confronted with an entirely new demand, that he should either cede the whole of his dominions, retaining only a nominal sovereignty, after the precedent followed in the case of the Raja of Tanjore ; or secondly, cede as much territory as would yield revenue equal to the augmented subsidy, which meant in effect a surrender of more than half his dominions. The Nawab declined the first alternative, and in regard to the second he urged that there were no arrears of tribute to justify the demand. “ No failure or deficiency whatever,” he said, “ was experienced

¹ Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, pp. 155-6.

² *Idem*, p. 159.

³ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 425.

in the discharge of the expenses of the new troops, and in the payment of the *Kists* (instalments) of the fixed subsidy.”¹ The Governor-General replied by enunciating a principle which, if it was to be acted on at all, it would have been better to put forward in the beginning: “I consider it to be my positive duty to resort to any extremity, rather than suffer the further progress of that ruin,” caused by “the continued operations of the evils and abuses actually existing in the civil and military administration of the province of Oudh.”² But the Nawab was now absolutely at bay, and for seven months he held out, refusing to give a formal consent. On April 28, Wellesley ordered the Resident, if necessary, to seize the territory. On May 1, the Nawab tried to stipulate that he should be guaranteed for the future independent exercise of an exclusive authority in the remaining parts of his dominion. On May 27, Wellesley replied that he could not permit the Nawab to maintain independent power with a considerable military force within his territory. On June 8, the Nawab declared he could only offer a passive obedience. The Resident then stated the terms on which the dominion of his remaining territory could be guaranteed to him. The British must have the right to station troops in any part of his dominion. His own military establishment must be restricted to mere necessary purposes of state—for instance, the collection of revenue. There must be an “introduction of such regulations of police, under the control of the Company’s officers, as should be calculated to secure the internal quiet of his Excellency’s country, and the orderly and peaceful behaviour of his subjects of every description.”³ The weary Nawab replied that he could not agree: “the whole of

¹ Martin, *Wellesley’s Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 475, footnote. *Oudh Papers*, No. 3, p. 164.

² Martin, vol. ii, p. 478. *Oudh Papers*, No. 3, p. 186.

³ *Idem*, p. 231.

his territorial possessions, and of his treasury were at the disposal of your Lordship's power ; he neither had the inclination nor the strength to resist, but he could not yield a voluntary consent to propositions so injurious to his reputation." ¹

The Governor-General was naturally very anxious to extort at least some appearance of consent, and he therefore applied renewed pressure. The Nawab, however, merely answered him by " professions of passive, helpless and reluctant obedience." ² In September 1801 Lord Wellesley tried a new expedient by sending to Oudh his brother Henry. Once more the alternatives were put before the Nawab. He still refused to accept the first, though he was told, with an extraordinary lack of a sense of humour on the part of the British representatives, that " the true extent and meaning of it, and indeed the primary object, was to establish himself and posterity more firmly and securely on the *Masnad*." ³ Wellesley was almost at the limit of his patience and he threatened on September 19 to adopt the first alternative without the Nawab's consent. The Nawab now withdrew his opposition to the second proposal, saving his own face by appointing his son to act for him.

The treaty was signed on November 10, 1801.⁴ The territory surrendered was Rohilkhand and the Lower Doab—that is, the land lying between the Ganges and the Jumna. It was extremely rich and valuable territory and was known henceforth as the Ceded Provinces. Two important results of this accession were, first, that Oudh was now entirely surrounded by British territory, except on the north, where the frontier marched with that of Nepal ; secondly, the British now confronted Sindhia along the

¹ *Oudh Papers*, No. 3, p. 231.

² Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 170.

³ *Oudh Papers*, No. 4, p. 14.

⁴ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, pp. 598-602, footnote.

whole line of the latter's northern possessions. The wheel had come full circle. The policy of maintaining Oudh as a buffer state was definitely given up. It will be remembered that Rohilkhand had been sold to the Nawab after the Rohilla war. "By a singular reverse of circumstances," says Mr. Beveridge, "the Company were able, after having pocketed the price, to seize the territories, and thus obtain possession both of price and subject." The policy of Hastings was to improve the frontiers of Oudh and interpose it "as a barrier for the protection of the Company, and Lord Mornington had now taken possession of all the territories thus acquired with the avowed object of interposing the Company as a barrier for the protection of Oudh."¹ It is to be noticed that even within the reserved territory left to him the Nawab was bound to act in accordance with the advice of the Company's representative: "His Excellency engages that he will establish in his reserved dominions such a system of administration (to be carried into effect by his own officers) as shall be conducive to the prosperity of his subjects, and be calculated to secure the lives and property of the inhabitants; and His Excellency will always advise with, and act in conformity to, the counsel of the officers of the . . . Company";² on which the Nawab made the natural comment: "It is evident that I can derive no advantage from alienating part of my country, whilst I shall not remain master of the remainder."³ This was the simple truth, and Wellesley hardly troubled to contest it. A little later, when the Nawab complained of the interference of the Resident, the Governor-General declined to exempt him from a restraint which, in his own words, only ensured "that degree of interference and control

¹ Beveridge, *History of India*, vol. ii, p. 731.

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 601.

³ *Oudh Papers*, No. 4, p. 39.

which is indispensably necessary for the support of the British influence in Oudh.”¹

The advantages of the treaty are thus summed up by Wellesley himself. It brought about the entire extinction of the military power of the Nawab, and the maintenance of part of the Bengal army at his expense. The subsidy is no longer affected by “the corruption, imbecility and abuse of that vicious and incorrigible system of vexation and misrule”—the native government of Oudh, but is established on “the solid foundation of territorial possession.” Power is acquired of improving the internal condition of Oudh, and the East India Company are delivered from the stain of upholding so disgraceful, and ruinous a system: “The British Government . . . will become the instrument of restoring to affluence and prosperity one of the most fertile regions of the globe.”² Arthur Wellesley, looking at the result from the point of view of the soldier, dwelt on the strategic importance of the accessions. “The frontier,” he said, “was not increased. The Company were equally bound to defend, and had actually defended, this same frontier in 1798 and 1799 . . . so that all was gain and strength, without the smallest degree of disadvantage or weakness.”³ This was undoubtedly true; the military frontier, as we have said, had hitherto extended far beyond the political frontier; they were now, for a time at least, to coincide.

In reviewing the history of Wellesley’s dealings with Oudh it is obvious that the objects achieved were far better than the means employed to attain them. Hardly any historian has ventured to justify the latter. Mill, of course, is condemnatory throughout, but even Dr. H. H. Wilson has to admit that the mode in which the negotiations were carried on was in some respects objectionable,

¹ Martin, *Wellesley’s Despatches*, vol. ii, pp. 679-80.

² *Idem*, pp. 606-7.

³ Owen, *Wellington’s Despatches*, p. 13.

and that some of Mill's comments upon Wellesley's reasoning are not undeserved. He can only suggest—and it seems a rather forlorn resource—that the Nawab no doubt found some consolation for his impaired dignity in the contemplation of the struggles he had made to avert the catastrophe ! He adds, what is probably true, that “a very short time after the business had been settled he seems to have been reconciled to his fate, and to have been happy in the quiet enjoyment of the amusements of royalty and the accumulation of wealth.”¹ Marshman says : “Of all the transactions of Lord Wellesley's administration, this acquisition of territory from the Nawab by the process of coercion has been considered most open to censure, as an arbitrary, if not unjust proceeding.”² Sir Alfred Lyall's verdict is that Wellesley “subordinated the feelings and interests of his ally to paramount considerations of British policy in a manner that showed very little patience, forbearance or generosity.”³ It is further clear that criticism of the policy reached the Company's headquarters in London. There is a paper in the India Office summing up the points in which Lord Wellesley infringed the letter, if not the spirit, of former treaties. These charges generally repeat some of those made by the Nawab himself. Most important are :

(1) That the introduction of additional troops into Oudh was an infraction of the existing treaties.

(2) The demand of territorial security for the payment of the subsidies was not warranted by the treaty of 1798, as there were no arrears.

(3) That the ceded territory was violently and compulsorily wrested from the Nawab.

(4) The stipulation that the Nawab should abide by

¹ Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, pp. 184-5, footnote.

² Marshman, *History of India*, Pt. II, p. 50.

³ Sir A. C. Lyall, *British Dominion in India*. London, 1907, p. 246.

the advice of the Company's officers in internal matters was a breach of the treaties of 1797 and 1798.¹

In the famous draft despatch of 1805 which the Directors were not allowed by the Board of Control to send to India a severe comment was passed on Wellesley's diplomacy. "It is painful," said the Court, "to peruse the correspondence on the subject of the negotiations, if a positive demand, accompanied by threats of a most alarming nature can be so denominated . . . we are not surprised that . . . the Nabob as stated in the records, should have sometimes seemed to be in a state of intoxication, at other times dejected and in tears, declaring that after the execution of the Treaty he should be ashamed to show his face to his people."²

Even the Board of Control had serious heart-searchings about the whole business. There exists in the India Office records a report written by Mr. Holford, the Secretary to the Board, which is of great interest: "The object of this report is to bring under consideration the expediency of withholding such of the papers called for by the orders of the House of Commons of the 15 June 1805 as contain the details of the negotiations carried on by Lord Wellesley with the Nabob of Oudh, it being apprehended first that those papers might furnish a ground of attack not only against his Lordship but against the Government at home (which has approved the Treaty of Lucknow, without expressing any disapprobation of the manner in which it was extorted from the Nabob), and secondly, that they may be used by the enemy to create an unfavourable impression of English counsels in the different courts of Europe, at a time when it seems peculiarly important that the character of this country for justice and fidelity to its engagements should stand unimpeached."³ The writer

¹ India Office Records. *Fisher Papers*, 256.

² *Idem*, *Home Misc. Series*, 486, pp. 114, 117.

³ *Idem*, 236, p. 415.

then goes on to give a narrative of the whole course of the negotiations,¹ and adds : " It is conceived that, provided the means by which the Treaty of Lucknow was effected and the attempt to obtain the whole civil and military authority of the country could be kept out of sight, the treaty itself might well be defended as a convenient arrangement for all parties. It can be shown by other papers that a reformation in the Nabob's army and in the internal administration of Oudh had long been the object of the Company's attention, but the means resorted to by Lord Wellesley's predecessors had been confined to admonition and remonstrance ; the Company have on all occasions disclaimed any right of direct interference in the Nabob's government. We can make use of arguments drawn from Zeman Shah's threatened invasion in support of some measures for reform of the Nabob's army ; the danger of this invasion was not over till August 1801." ²

Apparently the disingenuous course of publishing a part only of the correspondence, while purporting to publish the whole, was actually adopted, for there follow in the records 226 pages of " Correspondence respecting Oudh between 13 April 1798 and 25 November 1802 which was not included in the volumes prepared for the House of Commons." ³ I have, however, read these papers carefully, and it is not particularly easy to see why they should have been omitted unless indeed they were supposed to illustrate too clearly, as perhaps they do, the constant interference of the Resident in the internal government of Oudh. Apart from that, it would appear that papers far more damaging to Wellesley's conduct of the negotiations were included in the papers presented to Parliament. It is just possible that Holford's opinion was not adopted, that these papers were omitted mainly for

¹ India Office Records. *Home Misc. Series*, 236, pp. 416-43.

² *Idem*, p. 444.

³ *Idem*, pp. 447 *et seq.*

reasons of space and to avoid repetition. Some of them too were certainly printed almost immediately afterwards. It is clear, however, that the Board of Control, whatever their official attitude may afterwards have been, were inclined at first to take much the same view of the whole episode as the Court of Directors.

Throughout the course of these negotiations it is clear that Wellesley was extremely impatient of all opposition ; that he showed far too little sympathy for his opponent and an utter incapacity to view things through the latter's eyes ; that he was culpably careless of fulfilling the exact treaty obligations of the Company ; and that the pressure he put upon the Nawab was improper and ungenerous. It is also true that when he had achieved his main end, which was in itself entirely desirable, he was prepared to soften the hardships that ensued as much as possible. Just as he had provided for the sons of Tippu Sultan with "disproportionate magnificence,"¹ so he took measures to prevent the commanders of the Nawab's disbanded army from losing their revenue. He did everything in his power henceforward to soothe the susceptibilities of the Nawab. Wellesley's defence indeed can only be based on the importance of the object to be attained and his purity of motive, and it is open to anyone to say that such a defence is inadequate for such harsh proceedings. Quite frankly, Wellesley did not regard Indian powers as independent states to be treated with the niceties of international law. It would be the grossest hypocrisy, declares his biographer, if we were to affect to concede any such doctrine as that we are bound to deal with the sovereigns of India as with the monarchies of Europe.² He turned with impatience from the subtleties and fictions of constitutionalism to the hard realities of the concrete world. He looked through

¹ Thornton, *History of British India*, vol. iii, p. 80.

² R. R. Pearce, *Memoirs*, vol. ii, pp. 131-2.

the immaterial barriers of treaties and agreements to the wretched condition of the administration of Oudh, which he so eagerly desired to rectify. As Wilson says : “ It was too late to inquire by what means the kind of connection which had been formed with the Princes of this country had grown up. . . . It was undeniable that their very existence was the fruit of British forbearance and protection . . . the entire command of the resources of Oudh was therefore, and must ever be, a legitimate object of British policy, and an equitable return for our protection and forbearance.” ¹ And lastly, we may quote the words of Lord Wellesley himself : “ I can declare my conscientious conviction, that no greater blessing can be conferred on the native inhabitants of India than the extension of the British authority, influence and power.” ²

¹ Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 184.

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 607

CHAPTER XII

THE SETTLEMENT OF THE CEDED PROVINCES

AFTER the acquisition of the new territory an important administrative problem remained, and the manner in which it was solved formed a classical example for the procedure in similar cases. A new country had to be settled, administered and assessed. Wellesley's plan was ultimately to extend to the Ceded Provinces the fully formed constitution of Bengal, but to prepare the way for that constitution by a temporary government endowed with special powers. In November 1801 a Board of Commissioners for Oudh was appointed. At the head of it, as President of the Board and Lieutenant-Governor of the Ceded Provinces, Lord Wellesley placed his brother Henry, whose real abilities he fully appreciated. This constituent body was to settle the revenues of the country and to establish a temporary system of administration, which was to continue till enough experience had accumulated to enable them to set up a permanent one. It was necessary at this early stage for the Government to be efficient, centralized and powerful. It was obliged at present to dispense with that differentiation of function which was theoretically desirable, and was now becoming characteristic of the settled and advanced administration of Bengal. The officers sent out to the districts in the new provinces were to combine in their own hands all executive, financial and judicial powers—that is to say, they were to act as collectors of the revenue, police officers, judges and magistrates. The Commissioners themselves were to assist the Governor-General and the President of the Board in

legislation, and they were to act as Courts of Circuit and Appeal in the administration of justice.

This temporary arrangement lasted till the beginning of 1803, when, their work being considered finished, the Lieutenant-Governor resigned and the Commission was dissolved. They had made a preliminary settlement and pacification for the whole country. In detail they had made a triennial settlement of the land revenue. This arrangement was not homogeneous as in Bengal, but attempted to meet varying local conditions. It was usually made with the landowner, but sometimes the farming system was employed, and occasionally the settlement was made with the cultivator. The Commission had abolished internal transit dues on trade for a regular customs-house tax. Finally, it had made salt a government monopoly.

The time was now considered ripe for the final step, and in March 1803 the Bengal Code of Regulations was introduced—that is to say, the full executive and judicial constitution of Bengal was extended to the Ceded Provinces. They were now divided into seven *zillahs*, or districts, in each of which were stationed one civil servant, exercising the functions of judge and magistrate, and another civil servant exercising the functions of collector. A Court of Appeal and Circuit was established at Bareilly, corresponding to the Bengal Provincial Courts. It was decided that the triennial settlement of the land revenue should be succeeded by another three years' period and then a quadrennial period, which is obviously equivalent to a ten years' period with two breaks in it, when modifications would be possible. Ultimately a permanent settlement was to be effected. This policy was afterwards reversed and no permanent settlement followed. It will be remembered that, in the case of Bengal, Sir John Shore had advocated that a preliminary decennial period should be adopted, and that, when the full facts of the land

revenue system had been collected and tabulated, then only the settlement should be made permanent. One of the arguments of Cornwallis against this, which is generally ignored, was that unless the opportunity was seized there and then, no permanent settlement would ever follow. So far as it goes, the result of postponing the question in Oudh entirely corroborated Cornwallis's argument.

It is to be noticed that the authors of the famous *Fifth Report from the Select Committee on the Affairs of the East India Company*, which was drawn up in 1812, considered that the introduction of the Bengal regulations into Oudh was made "with a degree of precipitation that appears on no other grounds to be intelligible,"¹ except on the supposition that the servants of the Company were lost in a rather indiscriminate admiration for the whole constitution of Bengal.

We may here deal with two incidents which are connected with Wellesley's dealings with Oudh, namely, certain communications which he had with the famous old Princess of Oudh, the old opponent of Hastings, known as the Bhow Begam, and secondly the treatment which he meted out to the Nawab of Farruckabad.

The Nawab of Oudh at this time had been musing on the history of his predecessors, and he contemplated, with the permission of the Governor-General, plundering his grandmother, the Begam. He no doubt remembered that this proceeding had received the approval of Hastings, and ultimately, it might be said, the approval of the High Court of Parliament, for Hastings, when impeached upon this charge, had been acquitted. But he must, from the sequel, have given up in despair any attempt to find consistency in British policy. When he made the proposal, the Begam, seeking a means to protect herself against the

¹ F. D. Ascoli, *Early Revenue History of Bengal and the Fifth Report*, 1816. Oxford, 1917, p. 201.

exaction, offered to make the East India Company her heir. The virtuous indignation of the Governor-General at the "insidious and disgraceful attempt" of the Nawab "to obtain the sanction of the British name to such unwarrantable acts of proscription" very conveniently enabled him both to protect the Begam and to accept an inheritance, which might otherwise perhaps have been considered to involve some considerations of delicacy and embarrassment. He declared majestically that the Begam's position was not that of a subject, but that "she derives her title to her present possessions from the same source from which His Excellency [i.e. the Nawab] derives his title to the *Masnad* ; her right, therefore, to dispose of her personal property in any manner she may deem expedient, except for purposes injurious to the interests of the state, must be admitted." For fear, no doubt, that these last words might suggest to the hypercritical that the surrender of the Begam's great fortune to an alien power might reasonably be considered deleterious to Oudh, Wellesley continued with magnificent sang-froid—his enemies might say effrontery—"The peculiar nature of the connection subsisting between . . . the Vizier and the . . . Company, renders the Begam's proposed transfer of her wealth to the latter, at the period of her decease, wholly unobjectionable with reference to the public interests of the state of Oudh."¹ We must note that in this Wellesley showed a really superb contempt for any historic continuity of policy. It will be remembered that the doctrine put forward at Hastings' trial and accepted by Parliament—the only doctrine indeed which could in any way palliate Hastings' action in supporting the plundering of the Begams—was that the latter had no right to any property in the lands or the moneys that they were holding, which in fact belonged to the Nawab. Mill's comment

¹ *Oudh Papers*, No. 4, p. 18.

here is to the point : “ The remarkable contrast between this doctrine relative to the property of the Begam, and the doctrine which was promulgated by Mr. Hastings, as the ground on which he bartered to the late Vizier the liberty of taking it away from her, the doctrine too on which that Governor was defended, aye and acquitted . . . will not escape the attentive student of Indian History.” ¹

The Nawab of Farruckabad ruled a small territory in the Doab extending for about 150 miles along the west bank of the Ganges. While he was still under the suzerainty of Oudh, he was by treaty under the special protection of the Company, and the rulers of his line had always given token of absolute loyalty to the British. The present ruler was a minor and the real power was in the hands of a regent. It was naturally, perhaps, to be expected in Farruckabad that since the allegiance of the Nawab was now transferred altogether to the Company, his general position would be improved. But Wellesley seems to have made up his mind not to let any opportunity pass, which would enable him to extend the boundaries of the Company's dominions, and to mediatize every Indian state that was not strong enough to resist. The young prince protested in vain, and in vain petitioned that one of his servants should at least be allowed to act in co-operation with the Farruckabad collector as superintendent of revenue. Wellesley took over the administration of his dominions and obliged him to receive a pension.

It is impossible to deny that there is a good deal of truth in the disapproving comment of the Court of Directors on this proceeding that, had not the sovereignty over his country been transferred from Oudh to the Company, the Nawab would have been left in continued possession of his territory, and have been protected against his

¹ Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 186.

overlord : " But no sooner is the Farruckabad tribute made over to the Company than his pretensions to the Company's protection are considered as of no validity." ¹

¹ India Office Records. *Home Series Misc.*, 486, p. 124.

CHAPTER XIII

FOREIGN AND IMPERIAL POLICY

THE beginning of the year 1802 marks a watershed in the governor-generalship of Lord Wellesley. Down to that date his success was almost unexampled. As a conqueror and annexer, he had vanquished Tippu ; extended British protection over Hyderabad and Oudh, relieving both of important frontier provinces ; and taken over entirely the administration of Tanjore, Surat, the Carnatic and Farruckabad. But these achievements had by no means exhausted his activities. Wellesley's mind had the wide sweep and unwearied energy of a great statesman. Engrossing though the tasks of Indian government were, he never forgot that he was the holder of an outpost of empire at a time when that empire was fighting—often almost unaided—a world war with revolutionary France. We have already seen how unceasingly he had combated French influence and French adventurers in the courts and camps of Indian princes, and how he had broken up and disbanded the European-trained armies, which an extraordinarily able band of French captains had marshalled and disciplined in the East ; but he was not content with defensive measures within the confines of the Indian peninsula alone. It seemed to him necessary that the Indian government should endeavour to impede a French expedition from Europe by alliances with the Asiatic countries, through which their route would naturally lie ; and further, that British forces from the Indian base should strike outwards at the colonial possessions of their European rivals.

In 1799 Wellesley had garrisoned Goa by arrangement with the Portuguese, to prevent that important port falling into the hands of the French. In 1801, on the outbreak of hostilities between Great Britain and Denmark, he occupied with British troops Tranquebar and Serampore, the chief Danish settlements in India. Wellesley was probably particularly pleased with the opportunity of seizing these stations, for he had the year before been protesting to Dundas against the dangerous privileges enjoyed by neutrals, who might at any moment, in the troubled state of Europe, become our enemies. He thought the right to pass up the river Hooghly ought to be placed under very strict regulations. "You already know," he wrote, "how injurious Tranquebar has proved to our interests during the whole of the present war. I assure you that the Danish settlement of Serampore is in some respects a still greater evil. Its vicinity to the seat of Government in Bengal renders it peculiarly obnoxious; adventurers of every nation, Jacobins of every description, swarm at Serampore, and it is the asylum of all our public defaulters and debtors."¹

It is difficult now to believe, as has been already said, that Napoleon's schemes for an overland march on India, either in 1798, or in 1801, could ever have had the remotest prospect of success. The latter plan, concerted with the Tsar Paul of Russia, was that a French army of 35,000 men under Masséna should march by way of Ulm to the Danube and thence to the Black Sea. The Russian fleet was to transport it to Taganrog, at the head of the Sea of Asov. It was thence to march to Tsaritzin on the Volga and be conveyed by boats to Astrakhan. There it was to be joined by a Russian army of 35,000 men. The united forces were to sail down the Caspian to Astrabad, where they were timed

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 204.

to arrive eighty days after the French forces had crossed their own frontier. The projected route thence was viâ Herat, Farrah and Kandahar to the Indus, a point to be reached in another fifty days.

The eastern crusade may seem to us now, as Professor Holland Rose has said, "a reckless maritime gamble and a challenge to that incalculable factor, Moslem fanaticism."¹ But Wellesley, at any rate, had learnt not lightly to use the word "impossible" of Napoleon's aims. The habit of doing so had led nations to destruction, and it is not inconceivable that, had the combined Russian and French force advanced a certain distance successfully, the glamour of the great Corsican's name and fame might have swept the hosts of the central Asian khanates, of Persia and Afghanistan in one devastating horde through the north-western passes of India. However this may be, Wellesley was only doing his duty as a statesman in forestalling the menace by diplomacy and war; and he determined to counter French intrigues in Teheran and to strike at their maritime base in the East.

In 1799 there was already a British envoy in Persia, Mehdi Ali Khan, a Persian who had been long in the employment of the Company. He had been sent by Duncan, Governor of Bombay, to prevent the Shah of Persia from favouring the French and to instigate him to cause trouble to Zeman Shah. According to most authorities, this man had done all that was necessary, but Wellesley did not believe that an Oriental with a very modest suite could possibly have created the impression he desired to make at the court of Teheran, and he therefore despatched John Malcolm with presents of great value and a train of five hundred persons—a retinue which the Directors, perhaps with some justification, considered excessive and ostentatious.

¹ *English Historical Review*, January 1929, p. 49.

Malcolm started from Bombay on December 29, 1799, and arrived at Muscat in the Persian Gulf on January 8, 1800. Thence he proceeded to Bushire, and was there detained for three and a half months by tiresome questions of ceremonial and etiquette. He reached Shiraz on June 15, where renewed difficulties occurred with the Prince Regent as to official forms, Malcolm refusing, from political reasons, to surrender his claim to be received as an envoy of a great power. "We are in general," he wrote, "too loose and disregardful of such points, and it is our general usage which occasions our distress in particular instances."¹ Finally, Malcolm reached Teheran by way of Ispahan, and on November 16 was presented to the Shah. Malcolm was much censured for his lavish expenditure on presents for the Persian Court, and he certainly seems to have gone far beyond what might be regarded as a reasonable standard in such matters. His defence was that he was dealing with "a Government not two stages removed from a state of barbarism."² Two treaties were drawn up, one a commercial pact providing for unrestricted commerce between Persia and the Company and the cession to the latter of certain islands in the Persian Gulf; the second treaty was political, binding both parties to aid each other against aggressions from Zeman Shah and the French. The Shah was to exclude the latter altogether from his dominions and to expel and extirpate them if anywhere they formed a settlement. The clause in the first treaty stipulating for the cession of the islands caused so much alarm among the Persians that Malcolm was forced to abandon it. The treaties were signed by Malcolm and a Persian minister, but were never formally executed by the contracting powers or actually

¹ J. W. Kaye, *Life and Correspondence of . . . Sir John Malcolm*, 2 vols. London, 1856, vol. i, p. 122.

² *Idem*, p. 147.

put in force, though undoubtedly the Persian Court retained friendly memories of the mission, and remained on good terms with the Indian government.

In 1801 Wellesley planned an expedition against the Isles of France—"those prolific sources of intrigue in peace, and of piracy and buccaneering in war."¹ Since the beginning of the war French privateers had carried not less than £2,000,000 worth of British property into Port Louis, the harbour of Mauritius. Wellesley actually collected troops under his brother Arthur at Trincomali in Ceylon, and was only baulked of his project by the refusal of Admiral Rainier, who was in command of the British squadron, to co-operate with him, on the ground that as a naval officer he could not act without express orders from the Crown. Wellesley protested vigorously, and rightly, against a doctrine which would "exempt public officers, stationed in distant possessions, from the indispensable duty of availing themselves with promptitude and alacrity of those invaluable occasions and opportunities of reducing the enemy, which remote wisdom cannot foresee, and for which remote authority cannot provide."² Rainier's action was indeed unpardonable, and it is difficult to understand how he escaped punishment, or at any rate the most severe reprimand at home. The President of the Board of Control, however, transmitted to Wellesley the sage decision of high authorities that, while no doubt could be entertained that Rainier's dissent to co-operate proceeded from a sense of duty, yet, "I am to express His Majesty's entire approbation of the general principles laid down by your Lordship . . . with respect to the conduct of the naval and military service."³ In his reply Wellesley had the politeness to make no reference to this brilliant example of official fatuity, or possibly

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 39.

² *Idem*, p. 757.

³ *Idem*, pp. 701-2.

we may conjecture that surprise left him speechless. There was still, unhappily, a certain jealousy between the War Office, the Admiralty and the East India Company, and Mill is probably right when, in condemning Rainier's inaction, he says : " It is impossible to avoid suspecting that he was influenced, however unconsciously, by a jealous tenaciousness of authority which disdained receiving orders from an East India Company Governor." ¹

Wellesley next made plans for employing these forces against Batavia, the capital of Dutch East India ; but ultimately they were sent to Egypt under General Sir David Baird to operate against the army that Napoleon had left there in the command of Kléber. Baird was told by the Governor-General that a more worthy sequel to the storm of Seringapatam could not have been presented to his genius and valour.² The troops proceeded by ship in March 1801 from Bombay to Mocha at the entrance of the Red Sea. Thence they sailed to Jeddah on the eastern coast, near Mecca, where they were joined by a force from the Cape. They then proceeded to Kosseir on the western shore ; in August they reached the Isle of Rhonda and thence marched over the desert to Rosetta, where these Indian troops gazed on the blue waters of the Mediterranean. There they found the end of their quest, for the French had already been vanquished by Sir Ralph Abercromby and were in treaty to surrender. Baird's army re-embarked for India at Suez in June 1802. It is true they had achieved nothing except their long marches, but they had made a most effective proclamation to the world that the far-off Indian Empire, instead of being merely a burden to the war-worn Mother Country, was able to react upon the European situation.

As soon as the Peace of Amiens was concluded, Welles-

¹ Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 246.

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 451.

ley received orders from the Home government to restore to the French and Batavian Republics all their possessions in India, with the exception of the Dutch posts in Ceylon. A year later the Cabinet found they had been unduly precipitate in their peace policy. They had to announce to the Governor-General the recall of the British Ambassador from Paris and the renewal of hostilities, and they urged upon him the recapture of the forts and possessions of the French in India. But their anxiety was unnecessary, for Wellesley, profoundly disbelieving that the peace could possibly be permanent, had taken upon himself the grave responsibility of declining to execute the original orders of his superiors, and when a French squadron had arrived off Pondicherry, they were told that the Governor-General intended to hold that settlement and the other French possessions till he had been able again to communicate with the Home government. By his courage, resolute purpose and clear-sightedness Wellesley had saved the Imperial government from a calamitous blunder.

CHAPTER XIV

THE COLLEGE OF FORT WILLIAM

WE turn from Wellesley's imperial policy to his plans for the reform and development of the internal administration. For some time he had lavished long and earnest thought on the problem of giving the best training and education to the young civil servants of the Company on their first arrival in the country. He surveyed the whole question in a comprehensive and statesmanlike minute of July 10, 1800.¹ In this paper he enunciated the doctrine that the British possessions in India now constituted a great empire, but pointed out that the commercial origin of that empire still moulded the outward fabric of the administration. The servants of the Company were still known, in their several grades, as writer, factor, junior and senior merchants, but they were in reality judges, administrators and statesmen ; " the mercantile title which they bear not only affords no description of their duty, but is entirely at variance with it," for all private trade was now, of course, debarred to them. Their duties as magistrates and collectors were as arduous and complicated as any in the world ; " they are the ministers and officers of a powerful sovereign." Yet no system of education and training has ever been established for them. They come out to India at the age of sixteen or eighteen. Either they have received a special education on erroneous principles, so that they are only fit for the " menial, laborious, unwholesome and unprofitable duty of mere copying clerks," or they have begun to receive a liberal education which

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii., pp. 325-55.

has been prematurely cut short. Lord Wellesley might well have quoted as an instance the case of the young Warren Hastings, who was taken away from Westminster School, where he was distinguishing himself as a classical scholar, and sent for a few months into a mercantile office to learn book-keeping. He therefore, curiously enough, illustrates both the forms of imperfect education to which Wellesley alludes. On arriving in India the novices, most of them mere boys, were plunged into the routine of work without any opportunity to make good their deficiency. They came to the new atmosphere, new conditions and new temptations of a life utterly strange to them without any guidance or warnings. No attempt was made to regulate their studies, manners, morals, expenses or conduct. It was true that in spite of all this many of the Company's servants had proved themselves upright and able men. Their mercantile status had not impaired their political talents. "I have found," wrote Wellesley, "the officers of the secretariat to possess the industry of clerks with the talents of statesmen"; and again: "The merits of the civil service are to be ascribed to their own characters, talents and exertions, while their defects must be imputed to the constitution and practice of the service."

Wellesley next discusses the point which was certain to be raised that, if the system had so far justified itself, there was surely little reason for any change. His answer is that it was neither fair to the Empire nor to the civil servants themselves to depend any longer upon the victory of special individual merit over unfairly adverse conditions and environment. "The extraordinary exertions," he says, "of individual diligence, partial success of singular talents, or of peculiar prudence and virtue, constitute no rational foundation of a public institution, which should rest on general, comprehensive and uniform principles. . . . The efficiency of the service cannot wisely or

conscientiously be left to depend on the success of individual or accidental merit, struggling against the defects of established institutions . . . the empire must be considered as a sacred trust and a permanent possession. Duty, policy and honour require that it should not be administered as a temporary and precarious acquisition, as an empire conquered by prosperous adventurers, and extended by fortunate accident, of which the tenure is as uncertain as the original conquest and successive extension were extraordinary." It is in such sentences as these that we see the true self-consciousness of empire, of its duties and of its burdens, first openly recognized in the despatches of statesmen, and to Wellesley must be given the high credit of seeing clearly that the immense extension of our Eastern dominion now clamoured for other instruments than those by which it had in its early stages been won.

After this preliminary discussion of broad principles, Wellesley decided that the education of the civil servants "must be of a mixed nature, its foundation must be judiciously laid in England, and the superstructure systematically completed in India." He therefore founded in Calcutta the College of Fort William. On their arrival in India the young civil servants were to reside there for three years and to study Indian languages, law and history. The expenses of their education were to be defrayed by a small contribution deducted from the salaries of all the civil servants in India. This provision was due to Wellesley's desire to avoid any criticism the Directors might bring against his scheme on the score of expense. He also attempted to meet another anticipated objection by pointing out that, though these young servants could not begin their work in India till after the three years' period, yet even under present conditions their value to the Company during those years was almost

nil. While in residence at the College, the young men were subjected to much the same kind of discipline as was administered in an Oxford or Cambridge College, and they enjoyed the same privileges of associated and communal life. He determined not to set up three separate Colleges at the three Presidencies—a system which might seem, owing to the differences of language and climate, inherently reasonable—but to bring together on their first landing all the students at Calcutta. His reason was that they would there be under the immediate control of the central government ; and, with a wise and remote provision, he hoped that the period of living together at the capital of British India would ultimately “extinguish all local jealousy and prejudices among the several presidencies.” He also held that “the civil service of Bengal is unquestionably further advanced in every useful acquisition and in every respect more regular and correct.”

But the Directors ordered the College to be abolished. They had one excuse for their action which it would be unfair not to mention. Wellesley in his usually imperious and autocratic manner had worked out and set the scheme in operation before obtaining their consent, which he claimed in the calm suggestion “that the early support of the Court of Directors will tend to give animation and spirit to the new Institution.”¹ It is likely enough that, if he had had the tact and patience to wait and lay his scheme before them, he would have won their consent. A more politic statesman, even though the scheme had been wholly his own, would have allowed his superiors to believe that some of the credit was due to themselves. These expedients may seem trivial, and in some ways unworthy, but they are often the absolute condition of success. Human nature being what it is, men—and especially men in positions of authority—do not like to have their

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 366.

hands forced, and in the later despatch of 1805, which the Board of Control would not pass for transmission to India, the Directors made this clear : " In this case there was not the shadow of necessity for hurrying to an instant decision. . . . We must confess that the precipitate establishment of the College had too much the appearance of an intention to supersede the previous deliberation of the Court, one obvious consequence of which would be to render the abolition or modification of an institution once formed more difficult to us, and we must here declare our determination to resist to the utmost every attempt by such evasive [corrected to ' indirect '] means to deprive us of that negative in the institution of measures not called for by immediate necessity which the law for most salutary purposes has left in our hands." ¹

Wellesley in a long despatch ² pleaded vehemently against the decision of the Directors " on this painful and most afflicting occasion." He justified the finance of his experiment and deprecated a tentative proposal of the Court that separate " seminaries " might be set up in each Presidency : " I must here declare to you, with that freedom which a regard for your interests demands, that the institution (which the Court has been pleased to abolish) has already corrected many of the defects which I found existing in the younger branches of your civil service upon my arrival in India, has reclaimed to industrious and meritorious pursuits many of your junior servants, who were disposed to pursue courses of a contrary tendency, and has raised a standard of public honour which is become the general resort of diligence, order, good morals, learning and religion." The most important benefits that will be forfeited by the separate establishments at the subordinate Presidencies are " the uniform education and

¹ India Office Records. *Home Miscellaneous*, 486, pp. 54-5.

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, pp. 640-66.

instruction of the whole body of the civil service in India in one sphere of political, moral and religious principles derived from a common source, and diffused throughout all the British establishments under the superintendence of the supreme authority in India.”¹ The Governor-General did actually postpone the execution of the Court’s order for a few years, and in that short time the College trained men who became famous in the civil service.

The sequel deserves narrating at some length, for the business of Fort William College was not settled without producing a sharp controversy between the Board of Control and the Court of Directors, raising in an acute form the question of their respective powers and drawing from Lord Castlereagh a notable opinion of what had been the intention of the framers of the famous Act of 1784 in subjecting the Company to the control of the state. Briefly, the Board were convinced by Wellesley’s earnest plea for at least a postponement of the dissolution of the College ; the Court were not. The Board suggested a draft despatch accepting the Governor-General’s proposal ; the Court, who showed extraordinary obstinacy in the matter, rejected it, substituting a draft of their own. This in turn the Board rejected, whereupon the Court maintained that it was *ultra vires* for the Board to interfere at all on a question of wages and salaries. Both sides now appealed to legal authorities and the decision was on the side of the Court. The Court, however, clearly foreseeing that the Board would get Parliament to modify the law, and having won their victory, proved unexpectedly amenable and for the moment accepted the Board’s despatch with some modifications. It only allowed a very short reprieve for the College, and the Court were soon able, when Castlereagh had gone, to get their way.

We may now proceed to give in greater detail the facts

¹ Martin, *Wellesley’s Despatches*, vol. ii, pp. 640-66.

of which the foregoing paragraph is a summary and the arguments of the parties to the dispute. On receiving Wellesley's plea for postponement, Castlereagh "merely as a private memorandum," drafted a paragraph for the Court to consider. "My object," he writes, "is to prevent the dissolution of the institution till we are quite sure that we have a satisfactory substitute to replace it with, but in doing so, I wish to pledge the Court to nothing which shall have a tendency to fetter their future decision." The draft ran as follows: "We have taken Lord Wellesley's letter into consideration, and after maturely weighing the several arguments . . . as well those derived from the change of circumstances, which has taken place since our orders were forwarded to India, as also with respect to the merits of the Institution itself, although we cannot accede to some of the positions laid down by his Lordship, yet under all the circumstances of the case, relieved as our affairs now happily are from the heavy pecuniary pressure with which they were affected, when the subject was last under our consideration, we are led to acquiesce in his Lordship's desire that the institution shall be continued till further orders." The question was to be reserved: "whether it may not be possible to establish at the respective Presidencies separate seminaries fully adequate to every useful purpose combining discipline with instruction, keeping the young men during the period of study more within the sphere in which they are afterwards to move and which may be accomplished on terms upon the whole less expensive, but we are prepared so far to yield to the arguments brought forward by his Lordship, as to think it expedient not to part with the existing institution till we are fully satisfied with the nature of the substitute." ¹

The draft seems statesmanlike enough and, as will be

¹ India Office Records. *Home Miscellaneous Series*, 504, pp. 349-51.

seen, committed the Court to very little. One can only be surprised that they did not accept it, but it would appear that some of Wellesley's arguments had particularly annoyed them, and they wrote to the Board declining to accept the draft. "The Board," they said, "cannot but be aware that the Governor-General in direct and ill-judged opposition to all the sober maxims of discretion, which had governed the most illustrious of his predecessors in office, proceeded at once to the hasty and premature adoption of an institution of considerable unknown expense, and in its first prospectus of almost indefinite extent ; the fundamental parts and all the bearings and relations of which should have been previously studied with deep and patient investigation." They protested that they had no prejudice against the Governor-General : "They endeavoured rather to find in his zeal a kind of apology for the precipitancy of his conduct, than to render it an object of their decided censure." They disclaimed the charge that they were swayed merely by commercial considerations : "it is a stale and unjust imputation." To Lord Wellesley's animadversions on the commercial titles of their servants they reply : "The titular denominations of Writer, Factor and Merchant have long served only to distinguish the rank and standing of persons in the service. The technical application of them to individuals on rare occasions of official form, conveys neither to those individuals, nor to others, any idea that the persons bearing them are actually merchants or even commercial servants. The servants are always in practice denominated by the office they fill, whether Presidents, Collectors, Judges, or Assistants to these, and as such, notwithstanding the calendarian use of ancient titles, they are universally considered and respected in society." They added that they were prepared to establish seminaries at the three Presidencies—"a plurality of seminaries . . .

will extend the circumference of learning more than one.”¹

When the Board maintained its ground, the Court showed its teeth still more plainly. It declared roundly that it was bound by Act of Parliament to originate all matters relating to the appointment of servants or creation of salaries,² and drafted an alternative despatch of its own. In this the Directors could not restrain themselves from dealing hard blows at the Governor-General in forcible but very ill-advised fashion. A College, they said, “ought to be specifically adapted to its professed end, and should be limited to objects of real necessity, or material utility, excluding superfluous pursuits, unsuitable expense, and needless display.” It should be directed to studies purely Oriental. Lord Wellesley’s College went far beyond this. The Governor-General’s reasons against dissolution were “utterly unsatisfactory to us.” Then followed an acid comment: “In our opinion Marquis Wellesley would have best consulted his own dignity, and set an example to the service, at least equal in importance, to any lesson it could have derived from the College, by a regular obedience to that authority under which the Law had placed the government of India.” The commercial designations, to which Wellesley so much objected, are simply intended “to discriminate the ranks of the servants. In all other views they have long been merely titular and dormant distinctions.” The Company, it is true, is partly commercial, partly political, but this fact is peculiarly suitable for its work: “It is capable of making the people under its government happy, but is less suited for high assumptions of title or of splendour, and it is proper there should be a conformity in this respect, between the character of the governing power and that of its ministerial

¹ India Office Records. *Home Miscellaneous Series*, 487, pp. 393-425.

² *Idem*, p. 451.

servants." They announce for the first time that they contemplate establishing some institution at home. They criticize the discipline at Fort William College, which, they say, by accounts that have reached them, "seems not well to harmonize with the glowing representations of the Governor-General's letter." They give orders for the setting up of a modest seminary in Calcutta and declare that they remain entirely unconvinced of the advantages of bringing all the young men to Bengal. In reply to Wellesley's arguments of the advantages of emulation they say: "We believe that the force of this principle would on the whole be augmented in a twofold degree by the establishment of a distinct college at each of the Presidencies. There would then be superadded to individual emulation, the emulation of these several institutions."¹

The Board regarded these views as a direct challenge to their superintending control of the Company, and felt that the time had come for a general assertion of policy. They replied that the aim of the law was clearly "to give the Board a full discretion in all matters appertaining to the government as distinguished from commerce and patronage." It was therefore within their power "to direct any establishment to be created . . . to prescribe the number of officers of which it shall consist, and even the *quantum* of salary . . . but having determined upon the part of the question which is strictly political, their functions cease, and it belongs in no degree to them to decide by whom those duties shall be executed or by whom those emoluments shall be enjoyed." The Board's view seems not unreasonable, for, as they went on to point out, "to argue otherwise, the principle must be assumed that the Board can give no orders which incidentally give occasion to the creation of any new office with salary." The Court's interpretation, they add, comes from ignoring

¹ India Office Records. *Home Miscellaneous Series*, 487, pp. 455-71.

the distinction between the power of governing, and the power of appointing to office—"between the power of deciding what is necessary to be done, and that of determining by whom it shall be done ; the former of which the Legislature has undoubtedly meant to leave ultimately and absolutely with the Board subject to the control of Parliament, as it studiously provided that their authority shall not extend to the latter."¹ They ended by disapproving the Court's draft, and reiterating their order that the abolition of the college should be suspended.²

Both sides now took legal opinion and the result was much in favour of the Court. The Directors propounded three questions to Lord Mansfield, W. Adams and Samuel Romilly, viz. (1) Whether the Board have power to order the revival of the College? (2) Whether the Court are bound to send out the despatch as amended? (3) Whether the King in Council has any jurisdiction to compel the Directors to send the despatch? In each case the answer of this very authoritative body of lawyers was in the negative.³ The Board consulted the law officers of the Crown, Spencer Perceval and Manners Sutton, but only obtained an opinion which can have given them very little satisfaction. They asked : (1) Whether the Board in their despatch have exceeded their legal powers? (2) In effect, whether the appeal to the King in Council upon any deadlock between the Board and the Court extended to the question whether any proposed orders should be sent or not, or to the subordinate question whether such orders related to the civil or military government (in which case, of course, they were within the control of the Board) or not? Though the law officers, in a judgement of enormous length, decided that the Board had not exceeded their legal powers, they declared that the appeal only

¹ India Office Records. *Home Miscellaneous Series*, 487, pp. 533-8.

² *Idem*, pp. 548-55.

³ *Idem*, pp. 573-6.

applied “ to cases where the doubt arises upon the question whether the dispute does, or does not, relate to the civil, military or financial concerns of the affairs of India,” and that the only remedy if the Directors refused to comply was by an application to the Court of King’s Bench for a *Mandamus*, or some other legal process.¹

The Court had won their victory, but they were wise enough not to press it too far. Obviously the Board might persuade Parliament to alter the law, and they heard that Castlereagh was preparing a short Bill “ to give the King in Council jurisdiction in all doubts arising under the Act ” ; and they asked him to defer doing so, at least till they were in a position to prepare their case. They also assured the Board that “ the Court do not think it necessary, from any practical question depending at present, to follow up this discussion about powers,” and since the Board cannot adopt the reasoning of the Court about the College, “ they are for the present willing to waive them, trusting they will receive due attention hereafter ; and they have formed a despatch to Bengal, of the tenor of that recommended by the Board. . . . They trust the Board will view the line of conduct they adopt, as a proof of their sincere desire to promote conciliation on all occasions.”² The despatch, therefore, which they now drew up, declared that the institution was to be continued till further orders. Having yielded so far, however, they took away most of the grace of this concession by adding that it was not intended that during this interval writers from Madras and Bombay should go to Calcutta, “ as we mean to take into our early consideration the propriety of establishing separate seminaries at our several Presidencies.”³

The Board, too, evidently did not wish for the moment

¹ India Office Records. *Home Miscellaneous Series*, 487, pp. 577-605.

² *Idem*, p. 561.

³ *Idem*, pp. 565-9.

to carry the controversy any further. They agreed to the new draft and to the additions made by the Court, "deeming them extremely proper to be inserted," and declaring that the despatch now fully accomplishes the object of the Board. They "acknowledged the candour of the Court in sending them Counsel's opinion," but announced their intention, with all due respect to the learned gentlemen, to act on the construction of the law as they had understood it.¹ The Board were perhaps unexpectedly compliant, for the issue shows that in the main point the Court had succeeded in getting their own way. The work of the College was already seriously curtailed, and, as soon as Castlereagh had gone, the Court made another step forward. A drastic reduction of the establishment was made in 1805, and in 1806 they announced their intention of establishing a college in England: "They desired that the instruction given at the college in Calcutta should be confined to the native languages," and the expenses were still further reduced.² Thus from the wreckage of this splendidly comprehensive educational scheme there was left only, as Mill writes, "a meagre contrivance for teaching the smallest possible quantity of the language of Bengal, necessary for imperfectly understanding the mere speech of the people."³

In a very interesting letter to Dundas, now Lord Melville, Castlereagh gives his own view of the controversy and its course. He says of the Directors: "I soon perceived the question of the College was forgot in their indisposition towards Lord Wellesley." When they put forward the view that the Board were incompetent to give orders involving in any degree the question of salary or establishment, he writes: "The claim made appeared to me so entirely subversive of every principle of Indian

¹ India Office Records. *Home Miscellaneous Series*, 487, pp. 609-16.

² *Idem*, 488, p. 748.

³ Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, pp. 256-7.

government, that I thought it material for the Board to state without reserve the extent of authority which they conceived themselves entitled to exercise and at the same time to direct the former despatch of the Board to be transmitted to India." Of counsel's opinion that the remedy was at common law, he writes : " If so, our authority depends on a law suit. . . . This is so preposterous that I had determined to bring in a short Bill to give the Council jurisdiction in all doubts arising under the Act." He goes on to say that in deference to the Court's appeal he waived his intention for that session, " resting upon the law as it stands, and leaving it with them to disobey our orders at their peril." There follow some interesting comments on the general attitude of the Directors and what Castlereagh understands to have been the intention of the framers of the Act of 1793 in nominally leaving the patronage to the Court of Directors. " I can easily perceive," he writes, " notwithstanding the Court has treated me with every mark of personal good will, that they are aiming at the extension of their authority to a degree which appears to me wholly inconsistent with your original views, which I conceive went distinctly to this principle that the ultimate authority in matters of Indian government (leaving the commerce and patronage in the Company) should be in the state, under the control of Parliament. Relying upon their forbearance, it was your object, as I conceive, to strengthen their hands by every appearance of authority. With this view you left the appointment of governors and all their servants in a legal sense in them, in confidence that they would in all cases accept the recommendations of the state in the nomination of their governors and that they would leave the appointment of executive officers abroad to those governors when so appointed. They have not as yet absolutely resisted the recommendation of government

in the former instance, though I could perceive on a late occasion a very strong disposition to think for themselves. Under the latter head, several instances have lately occurred which make it requisite to watch with extreme jealousy the disposition of the Court to assume a power, which they can never exercise directly for any other purpose than that of corruption and to the absolute disqualification of themselves from any useful or efficient control over their servants abroad." A little later, he says : " It is important, as far as is possible, to preserve the integrity of the principle, which you always avowed, that the Board of Control had nothing to do with the patronage, but we must not suffer the subtleties and refinements of this principle to extinguish the substance of what your measure aimed at, namely, the establishment of a government for India in hands responsible to Parliament." The abdication of patronage on the part of the Crown was a constitutional principle and was not made to gratify the Directors. " The patronage of writers and cadets is that which properly belongs to them. They can exercise none other practically without destroying the principles of the government itself, and when this great mass of patronage is dissipated and thus rendered innocent in their hands, nothing remains which can in a constitutional sense be matter of jealousy. The rest ought to be arranged on principles consistent with the efficiency of government." ¹

Having thus gallantly struggled with the Court, Castle-reagh wrote a letter explanatory and consolatory to the impatient Governor-General : " You will perceive after various endeavours to evade or disappoint the wishes of the Board, the Court have at last reluctantly executed the propositions originally made to them . . . That an adequate system of instruction in the native languages should be provided . . . seems conceded . . . the practical

¹ India Office Records, *Home Miscellaneous Series*, 504, pp. 36-44.

question . . . resolves itself into the extent and nature of the establishment.” “Your Lordship will perceive,” he continues, “that if those in charge of the governments abroad have occasionally to complain of mortifications and embarrassments from the proceedings of the Court of Directors, the superintending authority at home is not exempt from its share of difficulty, and that we are all called upon in our turn to endure that which is equally repugnant to our understandings and to our feelings.”¹

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iv, p. 39.

CHAPTER XV

THE INDIAN TRADE

IT is, of course, a truism to say that the East India Company advanced from commerce to political empire. But the stages of this transition are often not well determined in histories of India. As empire grows, the trading aspect seems to fade away ; we pass almost at one stride from the Company as a commercial concern to the Company as sovereign of a great dominion. It is useful to remember that Warren Hastings, of whom we rightly think in his latter years as a great statesman, wholly concerned with imperial problems, was appointed in 1769 to be the export warehouse-keeper at Madras. By Wellesley's time commerce had definitely taken a secondary place. The Company had become a governing and administrative power. "While the Company," said the Governor-General, "shall represent the sovereign executive authority of the realm in so great, populous and flourishing a portion of the British Empire, its duties of sovereignty must be deemed paramount to its mercantile interests, prejudices and profits. In time of peace, the happiness of its subjects, the permanent improvement of its dominions, the dignity, purity and vigour of its government must take precedence of commercial consideration." ¹ But this did not mean that Wellesley neglected or failed to understand the commercial aspect. He gave it considerable attention, and his knowledge of it was based on a wide appreciation of economic laws and broad principles of statesmanship.

As a matter of fact, the East India Company had long ceased to control, as it had once done, the bulk of the trade

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iii, p. 202.

to Europe. All contemporary authorities agree on this point. We find Dundas writing : " It is notorious that at no period the capital or commercial powers of the East India Company have been able to embrace the whole, or near the whole of the wealth of India, exported from thence by trade to Europe." ¹ Wellesley himself tells us : " The produce and manufactures of the British territories in India have increased to an extent far exceeding the amount which the capital applicable to the purchase of the Company's investments can embrace." ² According to Arthur Wellesley, the only reason why it was necessary for the Company to maintain its trade with Europe at all was that some means had to be found of bringing home in commodities, and not in specie, the surplus of the territorial revenue. To export silver would have entirely drained Bengal of the precious metals. Had it not been for this, he declares, it would have been better for them as a commercial body, to give up the trade altogether. " The commerce which it carries on by means of its monopoly is so little productive." ³

But if the British East India Company could not grapple with the great volume of trade from the East, it is quite certain that the natural flow of that trade would not be diverted, and as a consequence neutral nations were obtaining a larger and larger share in it, though, as we shall see later, they mainly depended on the capital and the fortunes of the servants of the East India Company. In a debate in the House of Commons in March 1806 a member called Prinsep declared that the proportion of the commerce of India possessed by neutrals was " most extraordinary and unfair, when compared to that enjoyed by the subjects of this country, commonly denominated private traders, nay even by the East India

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 104.

² *Idem*, p. 382.

³ Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, p. 493.

Company themselves," the proportion being three to one.¹ Wellesley tells us that in 1799-1800 the trade of America and Portugal alone with the port of Calcutta greatly exceeded that of British subjects. "The trade," he said, "conveyed in the foreign ships is conducted with all the advantages of a comparatively low rate of freight; of strict economy in the management of the concern; and of voyages and returns of extraordinary expedition and celerity."² As Dundas himself wrote in 1797, there was established "in foreign countries an Asiatic commerce founded on British capital, which by a contrary policy ought in the first place to centre in the River Thames and be from thence re-exported for the supply of other European nations."³

We have said that a great part of this trade, though carried under foreign flags, was supported by the capital of servants of the East India Company, and it may be of interest to explain how this came about. The great difficulty that European nations had always found in trading to India was the acquisition of purchasing power in the East. How were they to pay for the Indian commodities they desired to bring back to their own country? The Indian peoples in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had very little need of British goods. To export bullion from home was forbidden, or severely restricted, by the laws of most European countries. If only purchasing power could be acquired in India, ships could come out in ballast, obtain their cargoes and make the return voyage. For many years now this had been possible, through the fact that the servants of the prosperous East India Company had large fortunes to remit to England. The process had been as follows. Imagine that some

¹ Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. vi, p. 434.

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 384.

³ *Idem*, vol. v, p. 119.

wealthy Indian nabob desired to transmit the sum of £40,000 to London. How was it to be done? The transmission of actual specie was very difficult; costly owing to its weight; and dangerous owing to the risk of loss. The would-be transmitter could hardly use the agency of the Company, for he would not wish his employers to know the amount of his gains. To him would come some Swedish or Portuguese merchant, who, having come out to India with an empty ship, wished above all things for money to purchase Indian commodities. If satisfied with the credentials offered, the Company's servant would pay down the £40,000, receiving in exchange a bill at, say, one year's date payable to his agents in London. The merchant would take the money, purchase with it the Indian commodities he wanted, sail homewards, sell these goods at a profit and then repay his debt by sending the cash to a bank in London, ready to meet the bill when presented by the East India Company's representative. In this way for many years now the greater part of the trade was passing out of British control. We know that the problem existed even in the time of Warren Hastings. It seemed to him so serious that he wished the Company itself to benefit by this transmission of private wealth to England. Supposing, for instance, the Company had fixed the amount of money it intended to spend on imports (this money was called "the investment") at £2,000,000, Hastings suggested that they should add to that sum any amounts that their servants were desiring to send to Europe and then spend the whole amount on the purchase of commodities. The East India Company refused, and they can hardly be blamed for their decision, for, if they had accepted the proposal, they could never again have questioned the right of their servants to make illicit gains or punish them for doing so. But Hastings had pointed out that, if his plan were followed, traders of foreign

nations would either have had to abandon the trade, or they would have been driven to import into India bullion or specie which would have increased the prosperity of the country.

Apart from everything else, the existing condition of affairs was interesting as justifying the economic principle that laws which attempt to divert economic tendencies nearly always defeat themselves. The whole point and aim of the monopoly of the East India Company was that the trade with India should remain entirely in British hands, and that the profits of it should belong to the shareholders of the Company. The actual result was that the Indian ports were crowded with the ships of every European nation and the largest amount of profit went to the servants of the Company. The whole position is admirably summed up by Wellesley with his usual lucidity and force : “ The principle which has hitherto regulated the commercial intercourse between India and England has actually occasioned the very evils which it was intended to avert. The operation of this erroneous principle has forced the trade between India and Europe from a channel, in which it could have been controlled and regulated without difficulty, into the hands of foreign nations, where it cannot, without considerable difficulty, be subjected to any degree of control, regulation or restraint ; the same mistaken policy has filled the ports of India with the ships of foreign nations, has enabled those nations to rival the Company both in Europe and in India in many articles of its export and import trade, has invited from Europe and America adventurers of every description ; and, by the number and activity of these foreign agents, has menaced the foundation of your commercial and political interests throughout every part of Asia, and even within your own dominions.” ¹

This was the position with which Wellesley had to

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 390.

cope. It seemed obvious to him that the country could only gain, if this trade which was entering neutral ports everywhere in Europe could be brought by British ships to British ports and pay the British duties. He clearly understood that any reactionary attempt to re-establish a monopoly in the old sense was foredoomed to failure. "It must," he said, "ever be impracticable, if it were justifiable or politic, by any restrictions or penalties on the trade of British subjects, to prevent the increasing produce and manufactures of India from being conveyed to the markets in Europe, where a demand for such articles shall exist." ¹ He turned his attention rather to a freer system of competition, which would allow British merchants resident in India to trade freely with the Mother Country. He wanted to take away from neutral traders the one great advantage they had of procuring at pleasure purchasing power in India. "In the conveyance of Indian goods to Europe," he wrote, "rests the foreign merchants' sole advantage over the British. . . . Were the British merchants in India permitted to provide their own tonnage as occasion might require . . . they would soon possess themselves of nearly the whole of the private export trade from India to Europe, and would render London the universal mart of the manufactures and produce of Asia." ² Before we deal in detail with his actual proposal, it is necessary to state the legal position of the Company's monopoly at this time. The last Charter Renewal Act had been passed in 1793 ; and a very inadequate attempt had been made to remedy the state of things described above, by a clause obliging the Company to provide 3000 tons shipping annually for private traders. But this provision proved in practice largely illusory,³ the freight charged by the Company being so high. Arthur Wellesley tells us

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 385.

² *Idem*, p. 386.

³ *Idem*, p. 699. The company, as Dundas said, "agreed to it with reluctance, and it was so managed as to render the provision almost illusory."

that it was £5 per ton out and £15 per ton home, whereas foreign shipping could be procured "at a rate infinitely lower." The people of Great Britain, adds the writer shrewdly, paid this extravagant price for tonnage, "in addition to the price they pay for the mismanagement natural to an exclusive Company in all its commercial concerns." ¹

It may well be asked why the Company maintained this foolish and obstinate policy. The real reason was the predominant interest of the shippers in its council. At this time the Court of Proprietors, or shareholders, was composed mainly of three classes—the shipping interest, the city interest and the interest of what was called the Agency Houses. Of these the shipping interest was far the most powerful. The East India Company's mercantile marine, as Peter Auber tells us, "was gradually brought to such a standard of perfection, both in point of equipment and navigation, as far to surpass all other shipping of a commercial character, and even to rival the Navy of every other country." ² He adds that the scientific skill and knowledge of its officers was not inferior to that possessed by the officers of the Royal Navy. But this magnificence had its evil side. The captains of the splendid East India-men, who had their own privileges in regard to private trade, often became exceedingly wealthy and obtained seats in the Direction. Other persons, victuallers, ships' stores merchants, and all those interested in the outfit and equipment of the Company's fleets, qualified as voters in the Court of Proprietors. These men, says Auber, "obtained such an influence, in the Courts both of Directors and Proprietors, as almost to be able to direct the measures of the Company, not only in matters relating to the shipping concerns, but also upon great political subjects." ³

¹ Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, pp. 494-5.

² Auber, vol. ii, p. 233.

³ *Idem*, p. 234.

They kept the rate of freight at an exorbitant height, and, above all, they prevented the use by the Company of India-built tonnage, though by the navigation laws, the dominions in India being under the sovereignty of Great Britain, ships built in India were entitled to all the privileges of British-built shipping as in Canada and the West Indies.

It was at this point—namely, the question of India-built shipping—that Wellesley determined to take up the question with the Company. The Calcutta merchants had already in 1798 approached him with a petition that they should be allowed to employ such tonnage, maintaining that permission to do so “ would annihilate the illicit trade of Europe, and secure great advantages to London as the world depôt for Asiatic commerce.”¹ Wellesley claimed that the employment of this shipping was no longer merely a question of expediency or of a liberal commercial policy ; it was an absolute necessity to transport not only the private trade, the statutable tonnage of 3000, and the further amount which it had been the custom of late years to allow, but also for the conveyance of the heavy articles of the investment. For this policy he earned the rarely given commendation of James Mill : “ The liberal and unanswerable arguments, by which this opinion was vindicated were not calculated to render the measure acceptable to the narrow and selfish jealousy of the shipowners or of the Court of Directors.”² Wellesley urged that the course should be permanently followed. The question was naturally asked, “ Will not this ruin the Company ? ” To which Wellesley answered, “ No ; the Company’s long-established practice, its skilled servants and its credit give it so decided a superiority in the provision of the most valuable articles of piece goods and raw silk, that no private merchant by any practical reduction of freight

¹ Auber, vol. i, p. 238.

² Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 253.

can be enabled to rival the Company in these . . . articles.”¹ Even the shipbuilders, he maintained, would benefit from the large sums that would be spent on the ships from India going into English docks for repairs. The Court of Directors would have, of course, to determine whether the plan was to be made permanent. The Board of Control supported Wellesley, and when the news came that he had on his own initiative taken up Indian shipping for this year, Dundas, the President of the Board, wrote : “ I hope the information is true, both because it is a measure of much wisdom, and because it will bring the point directly to issue, and you need not be under any apprehension as to the result of it.”² Wellesley thought, and not unnaturally, that the Board of Control ought to have taken more responsibility upon themselves and shown greater initiative. “ You ought,” he wrote, “ in justice to my situation, to decide the question at home.”³ It may be of some interest to conclude with the views of Arthur Wellesley, who, like his brother, was entirely in favour of the extension of the principle of free trade. His solution was that the Company ought to be obliged to furnish private traders with the quantity of tonnage they might require, at the lowest rate at which it could be got. He also believed that they should have an equal right with the Company to import Bengal commodities and export British produce.

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 388.

² *Idem*, p. 106.

³ Auber, vol. i, p. 239.

CHAPTER XVI

THE BEGINNING OF OPPOSITION IN INDIA AND AT HOME

IN spite of the great success attained, there was naturally some opposition to the masterful policy described in preceding chapters. There appeared, it is true, extraordinarily little disposition as yet to criticize Lord Wellesley in the ranks of the civil service, or of the army in India. Censure did not become vocal in Parliament till a year or two later, but the Governor-General's imperious views had begun to clash with the interests of some of his countrymen in the East. He sent home many of the Englishmen, not in the Company's service, whom he found settled in Oudh, on the ground—a perfectly legitimate one—that they were breaking the law by engaging in trade without a licence from the East India Company. "My resolution is fixed," he wrote, "to dislodge every European excepting the Company's servants." These men began to raise their protests. "While the American, Danish, Swedish and other flags pervade the Indian seas," wrote one of them, "British subjects, unless members of the Company, cannot send a single ship to that country, which their wealth and their power are constantly risked to protect."¹ Only a British subject could be sent to Europe by the mere order of the Governor-General. "In India British-born subjects alone are alien."²

Wellesley would not endure any Press criticism of

¹ Charles MacLean, *The Affairs of Asia considered in their effects on the Liberties of Great Britain*. London, 1806, p. 73, footnote.

² *Idem*, p. 74.

official acts. We find him writing in April 1799 to Sir Alured Clarke : " I shall take an early opportunity of transmitting rules for the conduct of the whole tribe of editors ; in the meantime, if you cannot tranquillize the editors of this and other mischievous publications, be so good as to suppress their papers by force, and send their persons to Europe." ¹ The Press regulations, when they were issued, proved extremely drastic. The editor's name was to be printed at the end of every journal. Every editor and every proprietor of a paper was himself to give his name to the Secretary to Government. No papers were to be published on Sunday. No paper was to be published at all until it should have been previously inspected by a government official. The penalty for offending against these regulations was immediate embarkation for Europe. Even Pearce, Wellesley's biographer, in commenting on these rules, is constrained to write that they " vary in no material particular from the ordinances promulgated by the Star Chamber in A.D. 1585 " ; ² while they were described by Charles MacLean, one of Wellesley's victims, as " the *ne plus ultra* of human despotism." ³

This man, an English merchant, not in the Company's service, on what appears to have been considerable provocation, ⁴ wrote a letter which was published in an Indian newspaper criticizing the judge and the magistrates of Ghazipur. Both the editor of the paper and MacLean were called upon to make a public apology to the judicial officer because, in the words of Wellesley, they had " assumed a privilege of animadverting, through the medium of a public print, upon the proceedings of a Court of Justice, and of censuring the conduct of a public officer

¹ R. R. Pearce, *Memoirs*, vol. i, pp. 278-9.

² *Idem*, p. 286.

³ MacLean, *The Affairs of Asia*, p. 108.

⁴ For MacLean's case see *To the British Inhabitants of India*, by C. M. London, n.d.

for acts done in his official capacity.”¹ The editor submitted, but MacLean was recalcitrant, and he was therefore sent home, partly for his contumacy, partly for being in India without the Company’s licence. At home he fulminated against the Governor-General in the pamphlet already quoted. “You . . . never drew breath,” he wrote, “until you annihilated the personal freedom of the subject, and extinguished the liberty of the Press in India.”² Again : “The silent progress of Asiatic influence, particularly under such a guide as you, is alone sufficient, by weakening the sentiment of freedom, and corrupting the morals of the people, to deprive our constitution and liberties of the sole principles by which they exist.”³

The enmity of these men, however, did not matter, though they were destined to cause Wellesley trouble later. What did matter was that the Governor-General was beginning to lose the support of the Court of Directors, partly, as we have seen, owing to his views on the education of their servants and on the trade monopoly, and partly for other reasons which may now be considered.

The Directors were growing uneasy about the financial situation, though, considering the fact that the Empire was at war and that in India there had been not only the campaigns against Tippu but large annexations of territory necessarily involving at first more expense than gain, it can only be said that the conduct of the finances by St. George Tucker, Wellesley’s finance minister, had been remarkably successful. Dundas, in introducing the Indian Budget into Parliament in 1800, announced that this was the first occasion in which a deficit “has appeared in the resources of India to answer the demand.”⁴ The accumulation of certain debts could not, of course, be avoided,

¹ MacLean, *The Affairs of Asia*, p. 45.

² *Idem*, p. 8.

³ *Idem*, pp. 14, 15. ⁴ Hansard’s *Parliamentary History*, vol. xxxv, p. 16.

and to-day we should think their growth remarkably slow ; but in the beginning of the nineteenth century, and especially in India, the whole principle underlying the creation of these debts was barely understood. The continuation of the deficits and the consequent piling up of liabilities was destined to be a growing cause of complaint in the immediate future.

The Directors strongly objected to Wellesley's appointment of his brother Henry as Lieutenant-Governor of the Ceded Provinces, as a "virtual supersession of the just rights" of their servants. On August 19, 1802, they directed that he should be removed forthwith. Their despatch, however, was disallowed by the Board of Control, who prohibited them from expressing at present any decision upon the appointment. They also reduced the allowances paid to Colonel Arthur Wellesley as Governor of Mysore. Their attitude was deeply resented by the Governor-General as equivalent to a charge of nepotism against him. The Directors had no doubt technical right on their side, at least as regards the first appointment, for such offices, by Act of Parliament, were reserved for the covenanted servants of the Company. Wellesley, however, was able to show that his brother had accepted the office and its burdensome duties without any higher salary than the one he was already receiving as private secretary. He was furious with the action of the Court in reducing his brother Arthur's emoluments, and declared that they "have offered me the most direct, marked and disgusting personal indignity. The real objects of this appointment were so obvious that I confess myself to have viewed the disapprobation of the Directors merely as an additional symptom of their disordered temper."¹

Wellesley had a right to be angry, for, apart from the fact that he did not deny to his brothers the appointments

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. v, p. 57.

that their pre-eminent abilities justified, he had shown himself determined to keep up the high standard in such matters that Cornwallis had set. There is not the slightest trace, throughout his whole period of office, of any indulgence to friends, or the friends of friends, in the question of patronage. He had announced his policy in a letter written to Sir Chichester Fortescue when informing the latter that he was probably to be offered the governor-generalship : " The first idea that may naturally occur to you will be that your nephew should accompany me to India : that is, however, impossible. I mean to take nobody but my brother Henry and not even to encumber myself with a single engagement from Europe. There is no other chance of discharging my duty honestly. Your nephew will be appointed a writer [the lowest grade in the Company's service] next season, I hope to Bengal ; and when he arrives in India, in a regular manner, I will give him every encouragement and assistance ; and if he deserves it (not otherwise) I will take care that he shall rise as quickly as the regulations of the Company's service and the attention due to the merit of others will permit ; more I will not do for my own brother ; nor would I accept this high station, unless I were assured of my possessing firmness enough to govern the British Empire in India without favour or affection to a human being either in Europe or Asia. The integrity of my own character in such a government is the best provision which I can make for any branch of my family, and if that were not good policy as well as morality, I have vanity enough to be resolved to sacrifice every consideration (but the public interest) to the preservation of a just and well founded fame." ¹ Five months later he writes to his brother William : " I have already obtained, by my abstinence from jobbing the appointment of my suite, the

¹ British Museum. *Addit. MSS.* 37,416, fol. 3.

warm approbation and full confidence of the Court of Directors ” ; and, with prophetic insight, he adds : “ My only apprehension is, lest they should expect from me more than I may find it practicable to perform.” ¹

Besides all other reasons, Wellesley was lonely in India. In a letter to a friend he describes his daily routine. He rides before breakfast, and then from 8.30 A.M. to 4 P.M. remains at work, unless he goes to Council, or to church on Sundays. At five o'clock he went for a drive, and dined at six. “ No constitution here,” he continues, “ can bear the sun in the middle of the day . . . nor the labour of business in the evening. After dinner therefore nobody attempts to write or read. . . . Thus in the evening I have no alternative but the society of my subjects or solitude. The former is so vulgar, ignorant, rude, familiar, and stupid, as to be disgusting and intolerable ; especially the ladies, not one of whom by the bye is even decently goodlooking. The greatest inconvenience however arises from the ill-bred familiarity of the general manners.” There follow some severe strictures on the methods of his predecessor, with whose whole way of life Wellesley would be out of sympathy. This evil is due “ to the folly of having placed Sir John Shore in the government general. His low birth, vulgar manners, and eastern habits, as well as his education in the Company's service, his natural shyness and awkwardness, added to indolence, timidity, and bad health, contributed to relax every spring of this government from one extremity of the empire to the other ; and at the seat of the government established a systematical degradation of the person, dignity and authority of the Governor-General. This is the true character of the last government ; never did there exist in India one more inefficient in its control over the subordinate presidencies, more

¹ British Museum. *Addit. MSS.*, 37, 416, fol. 10.

careless or timid with respect to all our foreign relations, more incorrect and even partial with respect to the distribution of patronage, nor (to complete the picture) one so little feared or respected by any branch of the civil or military service or by any description of natives or Europeans residing at the very seat of the supreme power. All this is quite for your private information. The effect of this state of things on my conduct has been to compel me to entrench myself within forms and ceremonies, to introduce much state into the whole appearance of my establishments and household, and to expel all approaches to familiarity, and to exercise my authority with a degree of vigour and strictness nearly amounting to severity. At the same time I endeavour as much as is compatible with the duties imposed on me by the remissness of Sir John Shore, to render my table pleasant to those whom I admit to it and to be easy of access to everybody. I am resolved to encounter the task of effecting a thorough reform in private manners here, without which the time is not distant when the Europeans settled in Calcutta will control the government if they do not overturn it. My temper and character are now perfectly understood ; and while I remain, no man will venture *hiscere vocem*, who has not made up his mind to grapple instantly with the whole force of government.”¹ Again he writes to Grenville in 1799 : “ It is not possible to give an idea of the pleasure which I receive from your letters in this magnificent solitude, where I stalk about like a Royal Tiger, without even a friendly jackal to soothe the severity of my thoughts. . . . But although I feel the perpetual misery of solitude, excepting my brother having no resource of society, and having (except him) left everything that is dear and valuable to me in England,

¹ *Historical MSS. Commission. Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., at Dropmore*, vol. iv, p. 383.

my sceptre is not otherwise burdensome to me ; nor am I afraid to wield it.”¹

The loss of friends both by distance and death weighed upon him as it has weighed, and will weigh, upon many in that Land of Regrets. On March 9, 1800, he wrote : “ I have written to Dundas earnestly pressing to be allowed to return home in January, 1801 ; I shall then have been above three years absent from England, and above two and a half actually in India. . . . The truth is that I cannot support a longer absence from my family and friends. In one of my letters to you I thought I had reconciled myself to my splendid exile ; but with the sound of triumph and honour all around me, and with the affectation of satisfaction and happiness, this proud Governor-General

Spem vultu simulat, premit altum corde dolorem.

. . . I have lost many valuable friends. . . . In this country the cry of death is for ever in one’s ears ; and it is too shocking to stand long when it proceeds from friends and companions and when no voice of comfort is to be heard. For God’s sake release me, and let me embark, *emeritus*, in January 1801.”²

Wellesley finally tendered his resignation on January 1, 1802, and again in March and October of the same year. He had spoken of his desire to do so in a letter to Addington in October 1801 : “ The Directors have been permitted to treat me in a manner which would have entirely destroyed the authority of a Governor-General of less personal influence and less determination ; and which eventually may affect my means of concluding affairs in the same tone which I have hitherto preserved without variation.” Wellesley felt the Court of Directors were

¹ *Historical MSS. Commission. Manuscripts of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., at Drogheda*, vol. iv., p. 474.

² *Idem*, vol. vi, p. 159.

getting altogether too powerful : “ Feeling my personal authority to be deeply wounded ; viewing the government of India at home to be falling rapidly into the hands of the Directors and foreseeing the relaxation of the necessary control of the Crown (on which I have always relied) and the consequent violation of all vigour, confidence, and dignity in the government which I hold, I am anxious to retire before I can be compelled to become the instrument of my own disgrace.” If he could have a free hand, he would be willing to continue for another two or three years, but : “ I believe the Court of Directors to be too strong for the government at home ; and I cannot suppose Mr. Dundas to retain any power of controlling them, after having accepted (very properly, I think) a pension from the Company.”¹

In a later letter to Addington of January 1802 he says that “ a due consideration of the relation in which I stand towards the Court of Directors . . . and a sense of the propriety of observing a submissive and respectful deportment in all my official communication with the Court have induced me to abstain from any official record of the real and efficient causes of my resignation.” Those causes are : the Directors’ want of confidence, their disapproval of important measures, the order to reduce our military strength, the order to reduce salaries (if the Directors really think he is capable of allowing Madras to give his brother an excessive salary, they “ ought to remove Col. Wellesley from his command and me from my government ”), orders to the subordinate Presidencies to act independently. Above all, he resented the interference of the Directors in appointing or removing his colleagues. The proceedings relating to the resignation of Lord Clive and the removal of Webbe were “ the most immediate causes of my resignation. . . . I consider Mr. Webbe to

¹ British Museum. *Addit. MSS.* 37,282, fol. 266,

be the most distinguished public servant in a subordinate situation in India." Yet he was recalled without any previous intimation, without any public charge. He had been the implacable, indefatigable, and irresistible foe of the corrupt system of intrigue and speculation at Madras. But the Directors supposed he had obtained too much influence with Lord Clive : " Mr. Webbe is removed because he possesses a large share of the confidence of the Governor of Fort St. George and because he adds to that crime the accumulated guilt of possessing an equal share of the confidence, respect and esteem of the Governor-General." ¹

But ministers were not yet prepared to let Wellesley go. Castlereagh wrote to Pitt : " I own I feel most extremely anxious that we may succeed in keeping him there for another year, being thoroughly persuaded that, peace now being made, the energy of his mind would pursue the principle of retrenchment as ardently as it has done other more animating considerations during the war." The new acquisitions, he continued, were not sufficiently consolidated to be entrusted to new and inexperienced hands. " There is much indisposition in the Court to Lord Wellesley . . . nothing can have been more unpleasant than the tone in which the Despatches have been written during the last year on both sides." ² Castlereagh's task of peacemaker we may be sure was no easy one ; a little later, referring to the treaty with Oudh and Henry Wellesley's appointment, he wrote to Dundas : " I can assure you it has not been altogether an easy task to reconcile our friends in Leadenhall Street to these measures." ³ Even the Directors, though they had carped against Wellesley and his policy so long, had perhaps not expected to be taken so seriously. " Though we have been under the

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iii, pp. iv to xli.

² India Office. *Home Series Misc.* 504, pp. 1-2.

³ *Idem*, p. 5.

necessity," they wrote, "of differing from our governments abroad in some material points . . . it is impossible for us not to feel and to acknowledge the zeal and ability which the Governor-General has displayed in the general management and superintendence of our affairs." They therefore desired him to remain in office till January 1804 : "Beyond this period we shall not feel ourselves justified in calling upon his Lordship to yield to our interest the desire which he may naturally feel of returning to Europe." ¹ By this time in England Pitt had retired from office owing to the refusal of George III to consent to Catholic Emancipation after the passage of the Act of Union with Ireland, and had been succeeded by Addington. Wellesley had already informed Addington that he would retain his office if the ministry would give him their confidence. Addington wrote in friendly terms, and Wellesley accepted the proposal of the Court of Directors.

¹ British Museum. *Addit. MSS.* 13,395, pp. 93-4.

CHAPTER XVII

THE TREATY OF BASSEIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

So far, as we have seen, the Maratha powers had not, since Wellesley's accession to office, come into very close contact with the British government. While other Indian states had been conquered or mediatized, the great belt of the dominions of the Peishwa, the Gaikwar, Sindhia, Holkar, and the Raja of Berar, stretching across India from the western to the eastern seas, still remained intact. It must have been evident to all that sooner or later the expanding power of Great Britain must make contact with the Maratha confederacy. Wellesley, indeed, had on more than one occasion made offers to them to enter his system "of defensive alliance and mutual guarantee"—for instance, in 1798, 1799, and 1800 to the Peishwa, and in 1801 to Sindhia. But, so far, these advances had met with no response. "Hitherto," he wrote in 1800, "either the capricious temper of Baji Rao, or some remains of the characteristic jealousy of the nation with regard to foreign relations have frustrated my object and views."¹ Grant Duff considers that Wellesley had shown his hand too clearly; "the haste with which the Marquis Wellesley expected his agents to push on his system, evinced an anxiety which retarded his object at Poona, where the Resident prognosticated that it would never be accomplished, until Baji Rao had found that all his schemes were fallacious."²

The position, therefore, at present was that the British

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 272.

² J. Grant Duff, *History of the Mahrattas*, Bombay, 1863, vol. iii, p. 138.

government had gradually moved their frontiers forward over conquered territory or allied states, now made almost wholly dependent, until they everywhere marched with the boundary line of Maratha dominions, but for the moment relations between the two powers were peaceful. It must have seemed to many that there were excellent reasons for maintaining this static condition. Our expansion in the last few years had surely been rapid enough. Time was needed to assimilate and absorb our new acquisitions. The Maratha powers seemed, to outward view at any rate, to have better prospects of permanency and stability, and to be governed by abler rulers than those Indian states which had proved unable to resist our advance. But in December 1802 the whole position was radically altered, as it were in a moment, by the conclusion of the Treaty of Bassein.

The causes leading up to this epoch-making event must now be summarized. Undoubtedly the most important was the death of the shrewd old statesman, Nana Farnavis, at Poona in March 1800. "With him," wrote Captain Palmer, the British Resident at that capital, with prophetic truth, "departed all the wisdom and moderation of the Maratha Government."¹ To this man more than any other had been due the stubborn front, repellent but not provocative, that the Maratha powers had so long presented to British ambitions. It was he who had resisted so successfully the attempts of the Bombay government, allied with the Pretender Raghoba, to force their *protégé* upon the throne of Poona in the time of Warren Hastings. It was he who had obliged Hastings to be content with the re-establishment of the *status quo* of the Treaty of Salbye. It was he who had succeeded in entering the alliance formed by Cornwallis against Tippu Sultan with the maximum of reward gained, and a minimum of assistance

¹ Grant Duff, *History of the Mahrattas*, vol. iii, p. 135.

rendered. It was he who at the Battle of Kharda banded together for the last time every power of the Maratha confederacy to overthrow the Nizam. And, finally, it was he who, during the first three years of Wellesley's government, had succeeded in keeping his country still detached from, and yet in amicable relation with, the British government. His ability in dealing with the turbulent feudatories of his master the Peishwa had been equally conspicuous. He had been at least a match for the great Mahadaji Sindhia, who never ventured to quarrel with him openly, and he maintained his own position at Poona against a crowd of rivals and intriguers. His life-work had been at all costs to maintain in some form the solidarity of the Maratha confederacy, and the hegemony, in that confederacy, of Poona ; and in regard to the East India Company, to prevent their penetrating his dominions just because he had such a keen insight into their capacity and strength. "He was," says Grant Duff, "certainly a great statesman . . . he is entitled to the high praise of having acted with the feelings and sincerity of a patriot." At the same time he had always been a great barrier to any alliance with the English : "he respected the English, admired their sincerity and the vigour of their government ; but as political enemies, no one regarded them with more jealousy and alarm."¹ He had, however, kept faith, and at the end of his life foresaw the troubles that were to come. Palmer wrote in February 1799 that Nana Farnavis lamented "on this and every other measure of importance the unexampled irresolution and procrastination of Baji Rao, who, in every instance of arrangement and preparation made in conformity to his own resolutions and orders, hesitated and delayed execution for ten, twelve or fifteen days without any change of circumstances, or assigning any reasons for

¹ Grant Duff, *History of the Mahrattas*, vol. iii, pp. 133-4.

his indecision." He reminded the British representative "that when he [Nana Farnavis] possessed real power in the administration of this state, he had faithfully performed every engagement entered into with the Company, and that his disposition (he said) in the present juncture was the same but his authority and influence were very different." ¹

After Nana's death the forces of disruption, which he had so long controlled, broke out. Daulat Rao Sindhia and Jeswant Rao Holkar entered upon a fierce struggle to decide which of the two was to control the Peishwa. Sindhia at first prevailed, and Baji Rao became little more than a state prisoner in his hands. It was clearly revealed that, whatever the issue might be, the independent power of Poona was a thing of the past, and that it was only the astute diplomacy, untiring skill, and never-ceasing vigilance of the old Brahmin minister that had kept the Peishwa's power intact at all. But Sindhia was not long to enjoy his victory. There was at this time a remarkable recrudescence in the power and position of Holkar, and on October 23, 1802, that chieftain defeated a combined army of the Peishwa and Sindhia at Poona. It is noticeable, as showing the penetrative force which a Western always exerts over an Eastern power, that Holkar's forces in this campaign were mainly commanded by British officers—Vickers, Harding, and Armstrong. The Peishwa fled, ultimately in a British ship, to Bassein. Holkar, who acted for the time with extraordinary moderation, set upon the throne a young man named Winaek Rao, the son of Amrut Rao, who was the adopted son of Raghoba. Amrut Rao had himself declined the peishwaship, though he agreed to act as chief minister for his own son. Barry Close, the British Resident at Poona, left that city on November 20, 1802, in spite of the earnest efforts of

¹ India Office MSS. *Home Series Miscellaneous*, 482, pp. 149-50.

Holkar and Amrut Rao to persuade him to stay. Both chieftains expressed their desire for friendship with the British government and declared that they wished to ask the advice of the Resident on the present situation of affairs.

The Peishwa, from Bassein, applied for help to Wellesley. In his extremity he offered to accept all those terms for a subsidiary alliance which he had hitherto declined. It may here perhaps be mentioned that in 1801, when it was clear that his power was in danger from the rivalry of Sindhia and Holkar, he had himself come forward with the proposal of subsidizing British troops, but he stipulated that the forces should remain within the Company's territories till they were wanted, and he offered only to surrender territory which was unsuitable to us. Wellesley declared that, by this arrangement, the Peishwa would derive the benefit of our support without becoming subject to our control. He had then offered the Peishwa alliance on the ordinary terms, which the latter had declined.

When the refugee Peishwa made his unconditional appeal for help, there were several courses open to the Governor-General. In the first place he might have followed the policy of non-intervention, declined to interfere in a domestic question of the Maratha confederacy, and contented himself with taking means to protect the frontier of his ally, the Nizam. In this case no doubt Sindhia would have attempted to restore Baji Rao, now more than ever dependent upon him, and an internecine Maratha civil war would have resulted. Lord Castlereagh afterwards hinted at such a possibility in his despatch of March 4, 1804 : " I can conceive, if Holkar and Sindhia had been suffered to reduce each other, before a treaty had been proposed to the Peishwa, that a broader connection might have been formed." ¹

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. v, Supplement, p. 308.

Secondly, he might have accepted the revolution and supported Holkar's candidate. There was, in appearance at any rate, a good deal to be said for this course. Holkar himself did everything he could to obtain the sanction, and gain the support, of the British Resident. Baji Rao had already proved himself cowardly, treacherous and utterly worthless, while Amrut Rao, who would have been the real ruler of the state, was by common consent a very able man. Arthur Wellesley described him as "the ablest Maratha in the civil affairs of the Empire." A further advantage of this solution was that the Raja of Berar would have supported it.

The third possible course was the one afterwards suggested by Lord Castlereagh—namely, that the British might have welcomed the Peishwa hospitably, and agreed to help him against the rebel Holkar, provided that the other members of the confederacy, the Gaikwar of Baroda, the Raja of Berar and Sindhia, would co-operate in his restoration.

The fourth and last course was the one that was actually followed—namely, to accept the Peishwa's request and engage to restore him to his throne.

We may now consider the motives which probably swayed Wellesley in his decision. As regards the first of the suggested courses opened to him, a policy of non-intervention was, of course, contrary to all his instincts. He would have intensely disliked the ungenerous task of refusing the Peishwa's appeal for help. He would probably have argued that merely to guard the frontier of the Nizam would have meant that in the end we should have been drawn into the contest, without the advantage of having been able to occupy any of the forward strategic positions. He was debarred from accepting the second course because, with his usual power of seeing through a tangled political situation, he recognized that "the power

of Jeswant Rao Holkar possessed no solid foundation in the justice of his cause, in popular opinion, or in the extent of political or military resource.”¹ No doubt, too, Barry Close would report the scene of rapine, extortion and outrage which had opened in Poona before he left it.² The objection to the third course was a practical one, that the attempt to restore the Peishwa with the help of the other loyal Maratha feudatories would have meant embarking upon a whole series of diplomatic negotiations, which would have been used simply by the powers concerned to spin out and complicate the whole problem.

The idea of a treaty fitted in exactly with Wellesley's desire to complete, centralize and focus the whole system of subsidiary alliances. All the Maratha powers concerned, as he says, had now appealed to the British government—the Peishwa for help to recover his throne; Sindhia for British co-operation in carrying out the restoration; Holkar, that we would recognize the *status quo*; Berar, that we would not forget his reversionary claim to the rajaship of Satara. “This crisis of affairs,” Wellesley wrote, “appeared to me to afford the most favourable opportunity for the complete establishment of the interests of the British power in the Maratha empire.”³ He saw clearly before him the chance of putting the coping-stone to the elaborate political edifice he had so laboriously erected, and he speaks of himself as “desirous of comprehending the principal branches of the Maratha empire in a general system of defensive alliance and guarantee, on the basis of the engagements so happily concluded with His Highness the Nizam.”⁴

The Treaty of Bassein⁵ was signed on December 31, 1802. It was constructed after the latest and most

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iii, p. 6.

² Grant Duff, *History of the Mahrattas*, vol. iii, pp. 159-60.

³ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iii, p. 6.

⁴ *Idem*, p. 7.

⁵ *Idem*, pp. 627-32.

approved model of subsidiary alliances. The most important provisions were : (1) The subsidiary force was to consist of five battalions and to be stationed within the Peishwa's territory in perpetuity. (2) For its support various territories producing revenues of 26 lacs were surrendered. A year later, by a supplementary treaty, these districts were exchanged for territory in Bundelkhand, as a rectification of frontiers convenient to both parties. (3) The Company was to control the Peishwa's relation with other states, and more especially to act as arbitrator in any disputes, existing or future, with the Nizam. This was, as Grant Duff observes, "a sacrifice on his part greater than the English authorities seem ever to have fully understood, or at all events appreciated."¹ The plains of Hyderabad had always been the hereditary plundering-ground of the Marathas of the west, and no doubt the Peishwa lost both material wealth and political prestige, when he let them pass out of the range of his predatory hordes. (4) The Peishwa was to take no Europeans into his service without the leave of the British government. (5) The subsidiary force was to be at all times ready for the due correction of his subjects and dependents and the overawing and chastising of rebels or excitors of disturbance. This clause was afterwards severely criticized as giving legal sanction to the employment of British troops in the work of oppression.

The Treaty of Bassein was different from all other subsidiary treaties in the fact that, theoretically at any rate, the Company had bound itself to control and protect, not a state, but a federation of states. There was now within the Indian sub-continent no first-rate power outside the system of mutual alliance and guarantee. This, however, would only be true in fact, if the Gaikwar, Sindhia, Holkar and Berar were prepared to admit that the Peishwa, as

¹ Grant Duff, *History of the Mahrattas*, vol. iii, p. 161.

head of the league, had power to act for them and commit them to the obligations of the treaty. That this was fully recognized at the time can be seen by the strong words of George Barlow, the Secretary to Government in 1803 : " It is absolutely necessary for the defeat of these (i.e. French) designs, that no native state should be left to exist in India, which is not upheld by the British power, or the political conduct of which is not under its absolute control. The restoration of the head of the Maratha empire to his government through the influence of the British power, in fact, has placed all the remaining states of India in this dependent relation to the British government." ¹ " The system adopted by his Lordship," wrote John Malcolm, " and approved by the authorities in England, must have been faulty and incomplete " without the Treaty of Bassein, " in as much as its tendency would have been to excite the jealousy without weakening the power, or dividing the interests of the different states of the Maratha nation." ²

The importance of the treaty has generally been recognized by historians as well as by contemporaries. " It was without question," says Dean Hutton, " a step which changed entirely the footing on which we stood in Western India. It trebled the English responsibilities in an instant." ³ Mr. Sidney J. Owen writes : " Previously there existed a British Empire *in* India ; the Treaty gave the Company the Empire *of* India." ⁴ Sir Alfred Lyall points out that after this date Wellesley's " subsidiary troops were encamped at the capitals of the four great Indian powers which had been our political rivals, at Mysore, Hyderabad, Lucknow, and Poona." ⁵

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iii, p. 187.

² British Museum. *Addit. MSS.* 13,592, p. 77.

³ W. H. Hutton (Dean of Winchester), *The Marquess Wellesley . . . Rulers of India* series. Oxford, 1893.

⁴ Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, Introduction, p. xlvii.

⁵ Sir A. C. Lyall, *British Dominion in India*, p. 250.

CHAPTER XVIII

CRITICISM AND DEFENCE OF THE TREATY OF BASSEIN

THE most searching contemporary criticism of the policy of the treaty is that contained in a paper entitled "Observations on the Treaty of Bassein,"¹ which was forwarded to Lord Wellesley for his consideration by Lord Castlereagh, the successor, in May 1801, of Dundas as President of the Board of Control. The paper, though unsigned, was soon recognized to be the work of Castlereagh himself, for it bore every evidence of his mind and style. We may indeed say of it that it is the work of a statesman of the highest capacity, who, in this particular instance, is dealing with matters which have hitherto lain somewhat outside his normal scope and view. It was impossible, of course, that Castlereagh should yet be altogether at home with Indian problems, or that he should not slip into errors in dealing with details, but he brings the suggestive comments of a fresh mind to the facts which he surveys, and it must have been difficult for Wellesley—even if he had desired to do so, and we have no reason to suppose that he did—to resent so moderate, so reasonable and so urbane a criticism of his policy. Wellesley handed it over to his brother Arthur to be answered, and with that answer I shall deal in due course. Lord Brougham, when many years afterwards, in 1837, he sent to Wellesley a copy of his article in the *Edinburgh Review* on the latter's Indian administration, wrote: "In passing, I have done justice to Castlereagh, who behaved well and I may say ably; this paper does him considerable credit,

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. v, pp. 302-18.

though he is so entirely wrong that it hardly required so very excellent an answer as the Duke's ¹ to make minced meat of him." ² In the review article itself he referred to Castlereagh's "very able paper," and added an interesting comment: "It is a singular circumstance, and strikingly illustrates the evils of governing vast dominions on the other side of the globe, that Lord Castlereagh states all his doubts and objections, in March 1804, to the policy which had been pursued from the latter end of 1802, but had been resolved upon, both in this country and in India, long before; that his Lordship gives, as the reason for not having earlier stated, or indeed been aware of those objections, his having been prevented from reading the long series of the negotiations with the court of Poona by 'a variety of other important subjects upon his attention,' during the eighteen months he had been in office, until the letters just received 'announced the probability of a rupture with the Marathas'; and, that long before his statement, with the suggestions which he grounds upon it as fit to guide the Indian negotiations, could reach Calcutta—nay, before the statement was committed to paper in Downing Street—the Maratha war had broken out; had been prosecuted, by a series of the most signal victories, to a successful conclusion; and had been closed by a treaty of peace, signed 30 December, 1803,—Lord Castlereagh's paper being despatched, 4 March, 1804." ³

Lord Castlereagh sets himself to examine first the abstract policy that has been aimed at, secondly the question how far it has been judiciously pursued, and whether the Governor-General, in concluding the treaty at all, has exceeded his legal authority. He begins by the statement that "the British power in India is too firmly consolidated

¹ *I.e.* the reply drawn up by Arthur Wellesley quoted *infra*, pp. 199-202.

² *Wellesley Papers*, vol. ii, p. 335.

³ *Edinburgh Review*, vol. lxvi, p. 153.

. . . and the prospect of attack from any quarter too remote, to justify us in prudence in risking a war, with a view of providing against a danger merely speculative.”¹ He hints that the danger of a French Maratha alliance was not very imminent. The idea upon which the treaty was concluded seems to have been founded upon the connection formed by Lord Cornwallis’s treaty between the Company, the Marathas and the Nizam for the conquest of Mysore, but the fall of Mysore and the extinction of French influence both there and in Hyderabad has placed the Maratha question on entirely new grounds. The Marathas have always shown a great repugnance to the British connection. They avoided it as long as they had any free choice in the matter. The Peishwa especially had always resisted the idea of a subsidiary force being stationed within his dominions. It is doubtful whether it was wise to seek alliance with the Marathas with such unremitting anxiety ; we might surely have shown more reserve. He suggests that it may be necessary either to abandon the connection or to modify it : “ It appears hopeless to attempt to govern the Maratha empire through a feeble and perhaps disaffected Peishwa. The military power of the state of Poona is at present inconsiderable.”² The Marathas, says Castlereagh truly, “ have hitherto respected our territory ” ; they “ have never in any instance commenced hostilities against us. When by taking part in their internal disputes we have been at war with any of the Maratha states, they have always availed themselves of the first opening for peace, and have shown forbearance and humanity to a British army, more than once, when in difficulty.”³

What inducements, he asks shrewdly, can we offer to the Marathas ? “ To talk to them of the advantage of our

¹ Martin, *Wellesley’s Despatches*, vol. v, p. 303.

² *Idem*, p. 306.

³ *Idem*, p. 307.

guarantee for preserving the peace of Hindustan, assumes that the genius of their government is industrious and pacific, instead of being predatory and warlike. . . . We not only place the Peishwa as a prey out of their reach, but we declare our purpose is to prevent them from plundering each other.”¹ Castlereagh goes on to state that in his judgement the benefit as well as the necessity of a Maratha connection have in the last few years been always over-rated. He suggests, as already mentioned, that if Holkar and Sindhia had been allowed to reduce each other, a broader connection might have been formed. Perhaps our safest line would have been to receive the Peishwa kindly and have professed a disposition to assist the other Maratha powers in restoring him to his throne. Had we remained with our armies on the frontiers pledged to neither party, both would have competed for our aid. If a subsidiary treaty was to be made at all, it should have been one in which the subsidiary force is not stationed within the ally’s territory : “ Much of my difficulty would be removed by our connection being so far simplified as to confine it to a mere support upon requisition.”² We should even discourage the Peishwa as much as possible from applying for this force. Wellesley’s policy gives us the Peishwa alone, while it commits us to hostility with the three greatest military powers of the Empire. The time had come, in Castlereagh’s judgement, to stay our hand in India : “ We have risen to an extent of possession and authority which can no longer be safely permitted to rest on any other foundation than our own intrinsic strength, . . . we should now be studious to give to our counsels a complexion of moderation and forbearance.”³ Castlereagh especially deprecated the twelfth article of the treaty which bound the Peishwa to accept our arbitration

¹ Martin, *Wellesley’s Despatches*, vol. v, p. 307.

² *Idem*, p. 316.

³ *Idem*, p. 314.

in all disputes with other powers : " Much of my doubt upon a policy of the Maratha connection however modified arises from an apprehension of its tendency to involve us too much in the endless and complicated distractions of that turbulent Empire." ¹

Finally, Castlereagh discusses the question whether Wellesley has legally exceeded his power. The clause in Pitt's Act of 1784 and in the Charter Renewal Act of 1793 clearly gives him no authority to conclude any treaty binding the Company to guarantee the territories of any state, unless that state shall at the same time bind itself to support the Company in a war then actually existing, or in the case of preparations then making for war against the Company. The Treaty of Bassein does not fall within the scope of this clause. But on the other hand, Wellesley's action was borne out by the instructions he had received from home of September 10, 1800. Castlereagh considers this in great detail, where we need not follow him, and concludes that " Lord Wellesley might reasonably consider himself as authorized to pursue the course he took." ²

As I have mentioned, the Governor-General asked his brother to draw up a paper in answer to these criticisms.³ Arthur Wellesley complied with this request, and he obviously did not realize, or was not told, or possibly preferred to ignore the fact, that Castlereagh was the author of them, for he refers to the writer throughout as " the anonymous observer." He begins by the statement that much of the writer's reasoning is to be attributed to his erroneous view of the political state of India : " the necessity of guarding against French influence was one of the principal causes of the Treaty of Bassein." ⁴ This contention is developed at great length, and it is maintained that Castlereagh consistently underrated the

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. v, p. 316.

³ *Idem*, pp. 318-37.

² *Idem*, p. 312.

⁴ *Idem*, p. 319.

French peril. The taking of the Nizam under the protection of the Company in 1800 made it probable that sooner or later there would be war with the Marathas. It was to avoid this war, and not because he exaggerated the importance of a connection with them, that Wellesley made his repeated offers to the Marathas. The unjust claims of the Marathas over the Nizam's territory were only dormant. It was certain that ultimately these claims would be asserted in arms and that, unless the British came to his assistance, the Nizam could only repel the attack upon him by maintaining French-trained battalions.

There was at least a possibility that the treaty arrangements might be upheld without war ; but if Sindhia went to war, the conflict would be of less extent and difficulty than that in which the Company must sooner or later have been involved with the whole Maratha nation. The seat of it would be the territories of our enemies instead of our own. As to Castlereagh's suggestion that armies should have been merely collected on the frontier to watch proceedings, Arthur Wellesley comments dryly : " I cannot exactly discern the object of assembling the army upon the frontier, if it was to do nothing. The most expensive article in India is an army in the field ; and the most useless is one destined to act upon the defensive." ¹

All the Maratha powers pressed the Governor-General to interfere in their affairs. The close of the year 1802 was the most favourable period that had ever occurred for an alliance with the Peishwa without war. There was no time for delay : " In all military operations, but particularly in India, time is everything ; and I am decidedly of opinion that, if we had not seized the opportunity, which was taken, the march to Poona would never have been effected." ² There would have been great difficulty in acting along with the other Maratha powers against

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. v, p. 326.

² *Idem*, p. 328.

Holkar, in the manner suggested. Sindhia would have had to agree to measures the direct object of which was to take the Nizam out of his reach. Besides negotiations would have taken too long ; the ultimate result would probably have been the combination of all the Maratha powers to attack the Company and Hyderabad : “ In respect to a concert, the anonymous observer forgets the difficulty and length of every communication with the chief who was to be a party to the concert.” ¹ There was really no ground for hope that any of the great chiefs would consent to any arrangement that would place the Peishwa at Poona out of their reach, and nothing short of such an arrangement would answer our purpose.

Arthur Wellesley did not agree that the offers of the Peishwa were not accepted because the Governor insisted that troops should be posted in his territory. And in any case, “ I can have no doubt respecting the expediency, as a military question, of establishing the subsidiary force within the Peishwa’s territories.” ² Finally, as regards the twelfth article of the treaty, it is “ the bond of peace to India. It is this which renders the Treaty really defensive, and makes the Governor-General really responsible for every war in which the British may be engaged.” ³ Arthur Wellesley adds a reflection based on real insight into national psychology—Castlereagh misapprehends the genius of Eastern governments : “ They have no regular established system, the effect of which is to protect the weak against the strong ; on the contrary, the object of each of them separately, and of all of them collectively, is to destroy the weak.” ⁴

Arthur Wellesley’s paper is a very able one and it makes a deep impression upon any impartial reader of his breadth of view, political and military capacity, insight

¹ Martin, *Wellesley’s Despatches*, vol. v, p. 327.

² *Idem*, p. 332.

³ *Idem*, p. 337.

⁴ *Idem*, p. 335.

into the Indian problems of his day, and finally, we may add, his power of presenting a case. The truth is that Arthur here was not altogether giving his own point of view. He was offering the best defence that he could for his brother's policy. In private he sometimes used rather different language. We have indeed, it must be noted, three separate representations of Arthur Wellesley's opinions on the whole question. We have this elaborate defence of a policy in answer to an able critic. We have his own private opinion, while actually engaged in carrying it out ; and lastly, we have his final conclusion, as he surveyed the whole issue in 1806 after his brother's period of office was over ; and it may be said—and this is no doubt largely a justification of the whole business—that when all is over, he finds that he is coming back to the position he had adopted when he was constructing a theoretical defence for a policy in which at the time he obviously did not altogether believe.

Serious doubts assailed him after the march to Poona and the re-establishment of Baji Rao on the throne. "I am decidedly of the opinion," he wrote, "that the alliance in its present form, and with the present Peishwa, will never answer ; and my efforts would be directed to withdrawing from it with honour and safety."¹ And again : "The greater experience I gain of Maratha affairs, the more convinced I am that we have been entirely mistaken regarding the constitution of the Maratha empire. . . . Whatever may be the result of the present crisis we shall gain nothing by the Treaty." He went so far as to suggest that we ought "either entirely to new model the alliance, or withdraw from it."² He declared rather bitterly in June 1803 that the difficulties in which his army was likely to be involved "will be a useful lesson to governments, and to us all : first, to avoid enter-

¹ Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, p. 242.

² *Idem*, p. 243.

ing into a treaty with a Prince, the only principle of whose character that is known is insincerity ; and next, to avoid, if possible, to enter upon a campaign at the distance of 700 miles from our own resources ; not only not having the government of the country on our side, but, in the shape of a friend, our worst enemy.”¹

Such were the doubts and heart-searchings that occurred to Arthur Wellesley while events were in progress. When he writes in 1806 his views again are modified ; he can look back now as from an eminence along the road he has traversed stretched out before him, and he sees, or thinks he sees, first that there was a reasonable probability that the treaty might have been carried into execution without a war ; secondly, though he admits that the British government ought to have contemplated the chance of a confederacy of Maratha chiefs, yet that the policy of Lord Wellesley, and above all the Treaty of Bassein itself, “afforded the most efficient means of opposing the Confederacy with success.”² Neither is it clear, he argues, that the omission to conclude the treaty would not have led equally to a war with all the powers of the confederated Maratha states under circumstances of increased disadvantage. The removal of Holkar from Poona was absolutely necessary. War must have followed, and if there had been no Treaty of Bassein “operations must have been defensive upon a frontier extending above 1000 miles, assailable in all its parts ; and the seat of the war would have been either the heart of the territories of the Nizam, or those of the Raja of Mysore.” And so he comes finally to his considered conclusion : “Upon the whole, then, I conclude that the Treaty of Bassein was a wise, just, and politic measure ; that none of the chiefs had any right to interfere in it or question its stipulations ; and that it was concluded under circumstances and at a

¹ Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, p. 247.

² *Idem*, p. 35.

time which promised that it would be followed by lasting tranquillity. If it should be contended that the British government ought to have expected, as a consequence of the treaty, the confederacy and war which happened in 1803, I answer that, with the military and political advantages they acquired by the Treaty of Bassein they had nothing to fear from that confederacy ; and that if they had not concluded the Treaty of Bassein, they would in a few months afterwards have been involved in a war with the same power, much increased in strength and resources, and possessing superior advantages, while those of the Company in every point of view, would have been diminished.”¹

There is no sign that Lord Wellesley resented Castlereagh's criticisms, and some years later after the latter's death he wrote to his brother testifying to his “ eminent ability, spotless integrity, comprehensive and enlarged views, sound practical knowledge, ready despatch of business, and perfect discretion and temper in the conduct of affairs.” “ Although,” he continued, “ he differed from me in some points connected with the origin of the war, he most zealously and honourably assisted me in the conduct of it, and gave me his powerful support in Parliament against all the assaults of my enemies. He at once saw the great objects of policy which I contemplated, and which have since been so happily accomplished ; and with a generosity and vigour of mind not often equalled, he gave me every aid in the pursuit of a plan not his own, and afterwards every just degree of honour and praise at its ultimate success. . . . During the whole of my administration, he never interfered in the slightest degree in the vast patronage of our Indian empire.”²

¹ Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, p. 36.

² *Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh, second Marquis of Londonderry*. Ed. by his brother, Charles Vane, Marquis of Londonderry. 12 vols. London, 1848-53, vol. i, p. 100.

John Malcolm, it is interesting to know, also commented upon Castlereagh's paper with his usual pithiness and force. The latter's great anxiety had been shown in seeking a policy which would diminish the jealousy of the Maratha states. "I know of no measure," wrote Malcolm, "which could prevent other nations from entertaining a great degree of jealousy of a neighbour whom they considered as superior in arms, in wealth and in power, except the state of whom they were jealous becoming from weakness of policy or a decline of strength less an object of envy or of terror." The treaty, by emancipating the Peishwa from Sindhia and Holkar, "gave him a degree of real power and importance as a ruler which he never before possessed." In dealing with the Marathas, "it will invariably be found safer and wiser to direct our policy to the reduction of their means of offence, than to place any trust in our happy management of the feelings of a people, whose trade is war and the sole object of whose power is plunder." The aim of the treaty was to restore the efficiency of the Poona state against the other Maratha powers, "and this is in fact all that was ever expected or desired from the Treaty of Bassein. It never was the intention of the policy which directed the alliance to govern (as assumed by the writer of the *Observations*) the Maratha empire through the means of the Peishwa." The reason why the Marathas, as Castlereagh said, had not hitherto been aggressive was for a good and solid cause ; our provinces were not then in their vicinity ; Hyderabad and Mysore were barriers ; but when we protected these two countries, "did we not succeed to all the political relations which these governments formerly bore to the Maratha nation ?" The treaty marks the culmination of a system : "The British detachment when stationed at Poona forms one of the great bolts of a chain of defence (and the corps at Hyderabad forms the other) which stretches across the

Peninsula from Masulipatam to Bombay, and which promises to oppose an effectual bar against the advance of the armies of any of the remaining Maratha states, and by this means those territories of the Nizam, the Peishwa, the Raja of Mysore and the Company which lay to the southward of this chain are secured from danger of attack or invasion." To ask for neutrality was all very well, but "moderation and forbearance are equivocal qualities unless exercised by those who have paramount and undisputed powers."

Malcolm indeed boldly faced the future and did not shrink from visualizing the ultimate goal: "It appears to my mind certain that both the measures of preventive policy which the intrigues and ambition of the native powers must continually lead the English government to adopt, and the wars into which the latter must occasionally be forced by the rapacity and violence of the former will not only gradually tend to the increase of the British dominions, but ultimately to the paramount establishment of the influence and power of that nation over all the continent of India. This ultimate effect will I conceive be operated by causes which we have not the power to control. It is in fact the natural progressive growth of civilization."¹

NOTE ON CHAPTER XVIII.

Mill's criticisms of the Treaty of Bassein and the policy that concluded it form, as Dr. H. H. Wilson justly says, "a very discursive and prolonged series of cavils" [Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 333, footnote]. Mill declares that Wellesley ought to have recognised that a war with Sindhia and Berar, if not with Holkar, would be part of the price to be paid for the treaty. The justice of this criticism may, as far as it goes, be admitted, for Arthur Wellesley agreed that war ought to have been foreseen, though we may note that he himself as late as April 1803 was writing: "Upon the whole, therefore, I think that, although there will be much bad temper and many threats, there will be no hostility" [Owen, *Welling-*

¹ British Museum. *Addit. MSS.* 13,592, fols. 83-148.

ton's Despatches, p. 227]. We must also agree that Lord Wellesley down to a regrettably late date assured the Directors that war was unlikely. The real question is, had Lord Wellesley respectably good grounds for assuming that the Marathas would refrain from military operations? Dr. Wilson says acutely: "It is one thing . . . to discover motives for actual conduct, and another to anticipate their existence; it is also far from a necessary conclusion, even when motives may be suspected, that they will be followed by acts, especially when it is obvious . . . that the acts are so impolitic as to render it probable that they will not be perpetrated" [Mill, vol. vi, p. 310, footnote]. He concludes that Wellesley was not exceedingly to blame; he "was mistaken in supposing that the Maratha Princes attached due weight" to the considerations which made war with the English inadvisable, "but they were sufficiently palpable to justify him in believing that they would not have been disregarded" [Mill, vol. vi, p. 311, footnote].

Mill's second criticism is that "the treaty with the Peishwa did not produce an alliance with any other of the Maratha States whatsoever. It did not produce the tranquillity of all India. It produced one of the most widely extended wars which India had ever seen" [Mill, vol. vi, p. 324]. The only answer to this criticism is the contention of all the best judges in India at the time—a contention which, of course, can neither be proved nor disproved—that to protect the Nizam's dominions we should have been bound in any case, sooner or later, to go to war.

Thirdly, Mill states that the good things derived from the Treaty of Bassein were first war with the Maratha chiefs; secondly the means which it contributed to the success of that war. As to the first, he contends that war might have been waged without the treaty; as to the second, that no shape which the confederation of the Maratha States had any chance to assume would have been so formidable to the English as that into which they were thrown by the Treaty of Bassein. It is perhaps hardly necessary to meet a criticism so captious, so complicated and so involved, but as regards the last statement we have seen that Arthur Wellesley held an opinion directly contrary. Dr. Wilson replies generally to these arguments that war was a contingency worth risking for the establishment of a controlling authority at Poona, it proved "not a bad thing, but it was not the proposed nor the necessary consequence of the Treaty of Bassein" [Mill, vol. vi, p. 335, footnote].

In the fourth place Mill holds that the influence of the French with Sindhia was at this time completely undermined and tottering to its fall. So jealous was Sindhia growing of his French generals that Wellesley might, if he had chosen, have made an arrangement with him for discharging his foreign mercenary captains without the expense of war. "The chances," says Mill, "are innumerable, against the event, that an army, officered as that of Sindhia by Frenchmen, should ever become formidable to one officered as that of the British in India" [Mill, vol. vi, p. 330]. Though there is a good deal of truth in this, there does not seem much ground for the assumption that Sindhia would, or perhaps could, have so easily disembarassed himself of the great French leaders, whose power had grown to such an alarming height. Mill proceeds to maintain that the treaty did nothing to forestall the danger of French reinforcements landing in India, but Wilson points out with truth that the danger was certainly diminished by a treaty which placed the maritime provinces of the Peishwa,

and of the subordinate chiefs who were faithful to him, under British military control.

Fifthly and lastly, Mill declares that Wellesley might have interfered effectively in the character of an arbitrator ; “ by rushing with his eyes fixed on nothing but the beauties of his defensive system . . . he sacrificed the high advantage of acting as a mediator among the Maratha princes ” [p. 327]. But few can believe that mere mediation, unbacked by military force, could have prevailed upon the parties to the dispute. After all, Wellesley was answering an appeal for help. Dr. Wilson’s defence is at any rate one that must be taken into account, namely, that the policy of the Company, the preponderating power, “ in defending the weak against the aggression of the strong, in preventing all unjust wars, in prohibiting, in fact, all war within India, was a magnanimous and wise policy, which, although not carried into operation without resistance, and not wholly effected upon the principles which influenced Marquis Wellesley, has ultimately succeeded ” [p. 335].

CHAPTER XIX

THE MARATHA WAR IN THE DECCAN

As soon as the treaty was signed, significant movements began between the Maratha powers. The Peishwa sent envoys to Sindhia and the Raja of Berar, nominally to explain the treaty to them, really to excuse himself and invite them to march on Poona. Sindhia crossed the Narbada in February and advanced to Burhanpur just north of the Tapti river and within twenty miles of the Nizam's frontier. Sindhia declined Wellesley's offer to conclude a similar treaty, but promised not to obstruct the Treaty of Bassein. He intimated, however, that as a guarantor of the Treaty of Salbye he would have expected to be consulted, and entered into communications with the Raja of Berar. Holkar's attitude was doubtful, but it was probably only his recent war with Sindhia that prevented him from joining the other two dissentients. Watching their attitude, Arthur Wellesley shrewdly observed : " It is true that as we have taken into our hands the bone for which they have been contending for some years, not one of them is very well pleased." ¹ This was, however, of course, to be expected, and for a time everything seemed to go well. The Peishwa was restored to his throne at Poona on May 13, 1803, by Arthur Wellesley and Colonel Stevenson. The British forces were accompanied by the southern Maratha chieftains—a fact which seemed to ensure national support for the restoration ; and by part of the army of the Nizam—a movement which seemed to argue the acquiescence in the arrangement of

¹ Gurwood, *Indian Despatches of the Duke of Wellington*, vol. i, p. 457.

the greatest Indian ruler in the Deccan. Holkar had prudently withdrawn to Malwa, and Amrut Rao retired to Benares on a pension. Looking back on his success some years later, Arthur Wellesley wrote : " By a skilful and ready application of the forces and resources of the government . . . the ally of the Company was restored to his dignity and to the exercise of his authority ; the usurpation of a most rapacious freebooter was destroyed ; and this dangerous neighbour was removed from the frontier of the Company's allies." ¹

After the restoration of the Peishwa, events moved rapidly, and the position soon became a threatening one. The Peishwa was strongly suspected of being in secret sympathy with the other Maratha powers and, as we know, was suspected justly. Sindhia was still lying south of the Narbada in a position very convenient either for a march on Poona or a raid into the Nizam's territories. He was, it is true, within his own frontier, but, unless his aims were sinister, there seemed no need for him to be posted with his army in so significant a position. The Raja of Berar was marching westward to have an interview with Sindhia. They met near the Adjunta-Ghat Gorge on June 3. It was clearly necessary to bring matters to a head. On May 28, the British envoy in Sindhia's camp formally communicated to him the terms of the Treaty of Bassein and required an unreserved explanation respecting the intent of the proposed interview between the Maharaja and the Berar Raja and the nature of the engagement entered into by these chiefs with Holkar. To this Sindhia made the famous answer that after his interview with the Raja of Berar the envoy should be informed whether the issue would be peace or war. Mill maintains that Sindhia did not intend these words to be threatening or provocative, but Wellesley not unnaturally pronounced

¹ Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, p. 31.

them an "unprovoked menace of hostility" and an "insult."¹ He promptly took all measures for the outbreak of hostilities and on July 14 sent an ultimatum in which he required Sindhia to separate his army from that of the Raja of Berar and to recross the Narbada. Both chiefs declined to move and made an attempt to justify their attitude by arguing that it was the duty of the Peishwa to have consulted with them before concluding a treaty which so deeply affected the interests of the Marathas. After further negotiations and discussion the British envoy left Sindhia's camp on August 3, 1803, and the war began.

Just as Lord Wellesley had assured the Court of Directors that war was not likely to follow from the Treaty of Bassein, so he showed himself extraordinarily loth to admit that matters were fast drifting to an open breach. As late as June 20 he wrote to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors that "any opposition from the Maratha chieftains to the complete accomplishment of the stipulations of the Treaty of Bassein, appears to be improbable."² Earlier in the same despatch he goes so far as to say that there is considerable doubt whether any confederacy exists between Sindhia, Holkar and Berar. It is not till August 1, two days before the departure of the envoy from Sindhia's camp, that he writes reluctantly to say that war is now imminent. On September 25 he sent a despatch stating at enormous and wearisome length the *casus belli*.³

We have now to deal with the first phase of the conflict, which was fought with Sindhia and the Raja of Berar, Holkar holding aloof in sullen isolation. It was one of the most completely successful wars ever fought by the British in India. At the same time the opposition was

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iii, p. 256.

² *Idem*, p. 147.

³ *Idem*, p. 330-79.

strong and the fighting fierce and determined. It was marked by extraordinarily fine strategy, and from the beginning to the end went almost exactly according to plan. There were four theatres of war—the northern districts of the Deccan, Gujarat, Hindustan and Orissa ; but all the movements were perfectly co-ordinated, and there were none of those breakdowns and miscalculations which are so common in war when concerted action on a large scale is attempted. Lastly, Lord Wellesley entered the war with the clearest possible conception of what he desired to obtain, and of the military and political situation that confronted him.

His main objects are thus summed up in an elaborate despatch. First, the destruction of the French state now formed on the banks of the Jumna together with all its military resources. “Monsieur Perron,” writes Wellesley, “has formed this territory [which was assigned to him for the support of his army] into an independent state, of which Sindhia’s regular infantry may be justly termed the national army.” The Governor-General points out that his position enabled Perron to dictate to the Rajput chiefs “with the authority of a sovereign state of a superior rank.”¹ Sindhia retained no efficient control over his mercenary captains or his regular troops, and in any case Wellesley had no kind of confidence in “the corrupt and profligate counsels of that weak, arrogant and faithless chief.”² There was, above all, the danger of the Napoleonic government using this weapon so ready to their hand : “Nor could an instrument of destruction more skilfully adapted to wound the heart of the British Empire in India be presented to the vindictive hand of the Chief Consul of France.”³ The international state of affairs between England and France would in any case

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iii, p. 210.

² *Idem*, p. 209.

³ *Idem*, p. 212.

have induced him to attack Perron, "even independently of any contest with Sindhia."¹ One of Perron's officers had seized a considerable tract in the Sikh country, and Henry Wellesley pointed out in 1802 the great danger of the French extending their conquests down the Indus, securing communication with the sea coast and gaining a *point d'appui* from Europe in a region where there were neither British forces nor native powers to oppose them.²

Wellesley's second aim was the extension of the Company's frontier to the line of the Jumna, with the possession of Agra and Delhi. Thirdly, he desired to receive under his control the nominal authority of the Mughal emperor and "to afford an honourable and tranquil asylum to the fallen dignity and declining age of the King of Delhi."³ Fourthly, he looked forward to constructing a system of alliances with the petty states of Rajputana lying to the southward and westward of the Jumna. Fifthly, he aimed at the annexation of Bundelkhand, and surmised that a further and more remote result of the accomplishment of these aims would be the commencement of intercourse with the Sikhs. These objects were mainly to be carried out by the Commander-in-Chief, Lord Lake, in the northern theatre of war. The other campaigns were all more or less subsidiary. In the south, Arthur Wellesley's task was to defeat Sindhia and the Raja of Berar, and then prevent them from escaping southward or attacking the Company's ally in the Deccan. In the west, Colonel Murray was to protect the capital of the Gaikwar of Baroda and to attack Sindhia's possessions in Gujarat. In the east, the war with the Raja of Berar was to be used to afford the Company an opportunity, which they had long coveted, of gaining possession of Cuttack and Balasore in Orissa, and so to make the territory of Madras and Bengal

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iii, p. 216.

² *Idem*, vol. ii, p. 666.

³ *Idem*, vol. iii, p. 214.

conterminous. Dr. Wilson says truly of this despatch : “ It is a remarkable exhibition of activity and comprehensiveness of mind. All the great objects both of a political and military nature are pointed out with a most perfect knowledge of the situation and circumstances of the different native chiefs . . . at the same time he is most liberal in his confidence as to the means by which the objects are to be effected, and most prodigal in his gratitude for their successful accomplishment.” ¹

We will deal first with the campaign in the Deccan under Arthur Wellesley, which was fought out in the region where the frontiers of the Nizam, of the Peishwa and of Sindhia meet. The position at the beginning was, as we have seen, that Sindhia’s camp at Burhanpur was in dangerous proximity to the Peishwa’s northern dominions and those of the Nizam. On August 12, Arthur Wellesley captured Ahmadnagar on the Nizam’s frontier. The importance of this was twofold : it secured British communications with Poona and therefore prevented any move of Sindhia in that direction ; and secondly, it robbed the enemy of a very important depôt of supplies and munitions. Its loss forced the Maratha chiefs to choose the second of the two alternatives they had had before them, and they now decided to strike at Hyderabad. This decision was no doubt hastened by the fact that Wellesley sent Stevenson to threaten Aurangabad, an important town about sixty-five miles north-east of Ahmadnagar. They set their forces in motion, penetrated the Adjunta Pass, and seizing Jalnapur, about sixty miles east of Aurangabad, marched south-eastward into the Nizam’s country. Wellesley, quickly on the alert, crossed the Godavery and pursued them. They therefore turned northward again. Wellesley got into touch with Stevenson at Budnapur, and then planned a united attack on the

¹ Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 338, footnote.

enemy from east and west in two divisions. He and Stevenson separated on September 22, intending to give battle on the 24th. But on September 23, finding himself only six miles from the Marathas, who were lying at a village of Assaye, about twenty miles south of the Adjunta Pass to which they were marching, he decided to attack them without waiting for Stevenson. The result was a complete victory, though the British loss was heavy, being 1566 officers and men killed and wounded. The battle was described by Grant Duff as "a triumph more splendid than any recorded in Deccan history."¹ Lord Wellesley showed a delighted and generous appreciation of his brother's success: "You have infinitely surpassed all that I could have required from you in my public capacity; and have soared beyond the highest point to which all my affection and all the pride of my blood could have aspired, in the most ardent expectations which could be suggested by my sentiments of respect and love for a brother, who has always held the highest place in my heart and in my judgment. . . . You may be assured that your reputation is of the first lustre and magnitude; and splendid, matchless as was your victory on the 23rd, it was not more than was expected from you."²

But Arthur Wellesley has not been immune from criticism from other and less kindly critics. Thomas Munro wrote to the victorious general: "I can . . . see dimly through the smoke of the Maratha guns . . . that a gallanter action has not been fought for many years in any part of the world," but he went on to question the policy of detaching Stevenson, suggesting that the latter would, as a reserve, have supported the attack and followed up the pursuit vigorously. He also thought the loss involved excessive. "I hope," he said, "you will not have occasion

¹ Grant Duff, *History of the Mahrattas*, vol. iii, p. 173.

² Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, p. 306.

to purchase any more victories at so high a price ” ; ¹ but he afterwards admitted : “ If there was anything wrong at Assaye, it was in giving battle ; but in the conduct of the action, everything was right.” ² Mill holds that Wellesley unduly sacrificed men by not waiting for Stevenson, but grudgingly admits that apart from this the action probably “ possessed all the merit of which the nature of the case allowed.” ³ In modern times Sir J. W. Fortescue has also criticized the tactics of dividing the forces. “ Beyond all question,” he says, “ this division of the army was a most dangerous manœuvre, for it left the Maratha leaders free by a small lateral movement to throw the whole of their force upon either moiety of the British. Wellesley, indeed, was so keenly alive to its faultiness after the event that he was careful to defend it, before it was attacked, when reporting it to a friend. . . . The real truth probably was that knowing Sindhia to be afraid of him, he did not hesitate to take even the most perilous liberties.” ⁴ Wellesley, however, has himself advanced reasons for the division of the forces which seem, if the facts were as he states them, to afford a complete answer to these criticisms. He pointed out that in the operation of driving the Marathas northward it was impossible for both armies to traverse the same pass simultaneously. If they had, the enemy might have escaped them by marching back again through the other of the two passes. It was therefore absolutely essential that British troops should march up both. The armies were never separated by more than twelve miles, therefore they could not be said to be out of touch with one another. “ Desperate as the action was,” added Wellesley, “ our loss would not have exceeded one-half of its present amount, if it had not been

¹ Gleig, *Munro*, vol. i, p. 377.

² *Idem*, p. 395.

³ Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 367.

⁴ Hon. [Sir] J. W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, vol. v. London, 1921, p. 22.

for a mistake in the officer who led the pickets which were on the right of the first line,"¹ and who advanced too far against orders. Munro, in considering this defence, replied : " I have still some doubts whether the immediate attack was, under all circumstances, the best measure you could have adopted." ² It may be taken perhaps that this still lingering vestige of criticism was not very much more than a natural disinclination on Munro's part to admit that his first strictures were entirely baseless. A general's main duty is to defeat the enemy, and Wellesley had done that swiftly, brilliantly and completely. It is always possible, in reviewing the tactics or strategy of an operation, to maintain that here or there some other course might have produced a theoretically more perfect result, but no campaign by this method could ever be immune from criticism. Certain reflections made by Munro himself in a letter to Colonel Read of March 6, 1804, by implication entirely justified Wellesley's tactics. " Our constant succession of victories," he writes, " is chiefly to be attributed to the Bengal and Madras armies having had a much greater body of regular cavalry than in any former war, and to the conduct of Generals Lake and Wellesley in availing themselves of the circumstances to make the campaigns entirely offensive, to give the enemy no respite and to push all their advantages to the utmost."³ It may be added that it would have been impossible to follow the policy—here so justly praised—of dealing blow on blow before the enemy could recover or take breath, if on every occasion a meticulous attention had been paid to theoretical counsels of strategical perfection.

After the battle the shattered Maratha armies streamed westward along the banks of the Tapti with a view to prevent Wellesley advancing northward against the city of

¹ Gleig, *Munro*, vol. i, p. 382.

² *Idem*, p. 385.

³ *Idem*, p. 391.

Burhanpur and the strong and important fortress of Asirgarh, which lies just north of it. To meet this movement, Wellesley remained in the south-west and sent Stevenson northward to attack these two places. The enemy accordingly modified their plan. Sindhia marched north to protect Asirgarh, and the Raja of Berar moved towards the Godavery. But on October 15, Stevenson entered Burhanpur ; while on October 21, Asirgarh surrendered to the British. With this fortress Sindhia lost his last possession in the Deccan. On November 23, a truce was made with Sindhia by which he pledged himself to remain forty miles east of Ellichpur, and the British engaged, if he did so, not to advance further into his dominions. The Raja of Berar still remained to be dealt with. He had separated his forces from his ally, Sindhia, and now made a sudden dash to the west as far as Chandore with the intention of working round to the south and penetrating the Nizam's dominions. Sindhia broke the truce he had just made by sending him a reinforcement of cavalry. Wellesley, by a brilliant series of marches and counter-marches, drove him eastward again along the banks of the Godavery and finally brought him to action at Argaon, about fifty miles east of Burhanpur, on November 29. The victory was much more easily gained than Assaye. The enemy were completely defeated, but the total British casualties were only about 360.

Wellesley now negotiated two important treaties of peace, mainly in accordance with careful and detailed instructions already given him by the Governor-General.¹ The Treaty of Deogaon on December 17, 1803, was concluded with the Raja of Berar. The most important terms were that the province of Cuttack, including Balasore, was ceded to the British, together with the whole of his territory west of the River Warda. The Company were hence-

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iii, pp. 497-515.

forth to mediate all disputes that he might have with the Nizam or the Peishwa. With Sindhia was made the Treaty of Surji Arjangaon on December 29. The most important conditions were that Sindhia ceded all the country lying between the Jumna and the Ganges, and the forts and territories which belonged to him north of Jaipur, Jodpur and Gohud. To the westward he gave up Broach and Ahmadnagar and all his territory south of the Adjunta hills. In return for these cessions the English gave back to him Asirgarh, Burhanpur, Gujarat and certain districts in Khandesh, the country lying along the valley of the Tapti, north of the Peishwa's dominions. Sindhia was to confirm certain British treaties made with his former feudatories. He renounced all claim upon his Majesty Shah Alam and engaged to interfere no further in the affairs of the Mughal Empire. He entered into an engagement not to take into his service Europeans of enemy countries or British subjects without the consent of the government. Sindhia was to be allowed to accede to the Peishwa's subsidiary treaty, "which," as Mill says, "in this case, was not to be subsidiary ; for the English government stipulated to afford the troops their pay and subsistence, without compensation either in money or land." ¹ The reason for this was that Wellesley did not believe that after the war Sindhia would have a disposable clear revenue to pay for the force ; he therefore assumed that we should receive sufficient compensation in the revenues of land which had been already ceded. Two months later, in February 1804, Sindhia entered into a subsidiary alliance which was negotiated by Sir John Malcolm. By it the defending force was to consist of 6000 infantry with proportionate detachments of cavalry and artillery. The troops were not to be stationed in Sindhia's territory, but near the frontier. This last clause, together

¹ Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 382.

with the fact already mentioned that the British undertook the expense of the troops with the proceeds of dominions already acquired, shows that the British government were eager to grant Sindhia especially favourable terms and to place him, even as a subsidiary ally, in a position of peculiar advantage.

CHAPTER XX

THE MARATHA WAR IN HINDUSTAN

THE campaign in Hindustan was contemporaneous with that of the Deccan, and it must, of course, be remembered that, in concluding the Treaty of Surji Arjangaon, Wellesley was harvesting the fruits not only of his own victories, but of those of Lake in Northern India. Since the treaties, however, were negotiated by the commander of the Deccan army, it seemed more convenient to deal with them at the conclusion of the Deccan campaign.

In one sense the campaign in the north was directed less against Sindhia than those great French adventurers who, nominally commanding his armies, had really carved out principalities for themselves. Sindhia's first European military adviser was De Boigne, who had had a curious and adventurous career. He was born at Chambéry in 1751. He first served as an ensign in the famous Irish Brigade of France. He fought in the Russian armies against the Turks, was taken prisoner and was actually sold as a slave in Constantinople. Making his escape, he found his way out to Madras in 1778, and there took service in one of the East India Company's sepoy regiments. In 1782 he resigned his commission and went to Bengal with letters of introduction from Lord Macartney to Warren Hastings. He planned, with Hastings' approval, a journey of exploration through Central Asia to Europe ; but he ultimately abandoned this project and entered the service of Sindhia. De Boigne was intellectually the greatest and, in moral character, the most attractive of the European military adventurers of India. He was an able

soldier and a great leader of men. A man of portentous industry, he is said to have normally worked eighteen hours a day. His chief talents were for organization, and he built up the great army which gave his master Sindhia the supremacy in India. Unlike many of his successors, he served Sindhia with great loyalty and devotion, and he consulted the Maratha chieftain's truest interests by exercising all his influence in favour of maintaining peace with the British. He retired in 1796, owing to ill-health, and his last advice to his master was to avoid all contest with the British government, and to disband his battalions rather than excite their jealousy or risk a war with them. He was, says Grant Duff, "a man of sense and prudence ; a decided enemy to French revolutionary principles, and though friendly and kind to Frenchmen who sought his service, the ideas of conquest in India entertained by many of his nation he regarded, even at that period, as chimerical." ¹ He always maintained cordial relations with the East India Company's representatives, and at the time of the mutiny of the Bengal officers in 1795 he actually placed a regiment of cavalry officered by Europeans at the disposal of Sir John Shore. No doubt his attitude towards us may have been affected to some extent by his former service under our flag, but it was due mainly to the view, which subsequent events proved the right one, that Sindhia's real interests lay in maintaining friendship with the British. On his retirement to Savoy he built a magnificent mansion on an estate which he acquired at Chambéry, and lived there till his death thirty-four years later in 1830, after having proved himself a most generous benefactor to his native town. Grant Duff visited him there and derived from his conversations valuable information for his "History of the Marathas." Chambéry commemorated him after his death by the

¹ Grant Duff, vol. iii, p. 175.

magnificent monument which still reminds visitors to that charming town of the amassed riches and romantic career of the greatest of these military adventurers.

De Boigne was succeeded by Perron, whose real name was Pierre Cuillier. The son of a cloth merchant, he was born in the year 1755, and came out to India as a sailor or petty officer on one of Admiral Suffrein's ships in 1780. After entering the service of various Indian chieftains, he became an officer in Sindhia's army and ultimately rose to be second in command under De Boigne. Though an able commander, he was altogether a smaller man than his predecessor, and far less attractive in character. He succeeded, however, to all the influence and power of De Boigne, and his position was greatly strengthened by Sindhia's prolonged stay in the south of India. This threw all the administration into his hands and made his status almost that of a reigning sovereign. He received tribute from the Rajput states of Jodpur and Jaipur. He was granted the monopoly of salt and the customs duties in Hindustan. He allocated to himself the regal privileges of coining money, and his annual revenue was estimated at £1,632,000. As a contemporary writer says: "Mons. Perron exercised an efficient, and scarcely disguised sovereignty, over a tract of country, perhaps the fairest in Hindustan; he possessed the important fortress of Agra, imperial Delhi, and the person of the Great Mogul—he occupied the richest province of the Doab—he had established cantonments for twenty thousand men, and constructed a fortress (Aligarh) of almost impregnable strength, within the Delta of the rivers Jumna and Ganges, in the very heart of the country which we were bound to defend; and on the preservation of which hangs the existence of the British Empire in India." ¹

¹ *Review of the Affairs of India from the year 1798 to the year 1806.* . . . London, 1807, p. 11.

Strong as Perron's position seemed, it was obvious at the beginning of the war that he was disinclined to cross swords with the British, and was anxiously looking about for some means to escape to Europe and secure his accumulated wealth. He was probably conscious that, in spite of appearances, his influence was waning, and that Sindhia himself was not likely to tolerate much longer his preponderating power. No doubt, too, in spite of his splendour, the situation was not altogether pleasant. "It was a dangerous and unsatisfactory post," says Dean Hutton, "to be captain of free companies to a vindictive and treacherous Oriental";¹ and Mill with reason speaks of "the miserable foundation and feeble texture of all such power as his."² Lord Wellesley himself foresaw at the beginning of the war the direction in which Perron's inclinations would tend. He would no doubt have preferred, he wrote to Lake, to dispose of his power to a French purchaser; "but I should not be surprised if he were to be found ready to enter into terms with your Excellency, provided he could attain sufficient security for his personal interests."³ The general contemporary view of him was given by a writer in 1822: "Perron under the protection of the British Government escaped the just vengeance of the Marathas, Sikhs, Rajputs and all the people of India. He has returned to France to exhibit before our eyes, as a trophy of his infamy, the diamonds and the millions he stole from the miserable Sindhia whom he betrayed. . . . The conduct of this traitor assured to the English the supremacy of Hindustan, and has done more harm to the name of France than 50 years of misconduct and misfortune could have accomplished."⁴

¹ Hutton, *Wellesley*, p. 97.

² Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, p. 353.

³ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iii, pp. 220-1.

⁴ Compton, *Military Adventurers of Hindustan*, pp. 334-5.

The campaign itself was brief and brilliant. On August 7 Lake marched from Cawnpore and on the 29th entered Maratha territory. Perron retreated after getting into touch with the British outposts. On September 4 the fort at Aligarh, the chief depôt of the French in the Doab, and situated about fifty miles south-east of Delhi, was captured, with a loss of seventeen British officers killed and wounded. On September 7 Lake received a proposal from Perron that he should be allowed a safe-conduct to Lucknow, since he had resigned Sindhia's service. This could not have been unexpected, for as early as August 28 Perron had sent a message to Lake "indicating a desire . . . to effect an arrangement which might preclude the necessity of an actual contest" between the British forces and those under the command of himself.¹ From the character of the man we may be sure that his attitude was largely due to the fact that he wished to secure a safe return to his own country and the preservation of his fortune, but it is only fair to say that the efficiency of his army must have been impaired by the fact that forty of the officers who were serving in his brigades, as British subjects, laid down their commissions on the outbreak of the war with the Company. Lake naturally granted his request. "This event," Wellesley wrote, "must diminish the confidence which the native powers of India have been accustomed to repose in the fidelity of the French officers."² On September 11, Lake defeated Bourquin, Perron's successor, at the Battle of Delhi. Bourquin was a wretched substitute even for the man he succeeded. He was of low origin, and had been a cook in Calcutta and then a manufacturer of fireworks. Compton is very severe on him, saying that, with one or two possible exceptions, "there is no more contemptible character among the military adventurers of Hindustan than Louis Bourquin, cook,

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iii, p. 367.

² *Idem*, p. 368.

pyrotechnist and poltroon ¹ . . . a man as weak as he was wicked, as conceited as he was incompetent and as timid as he was treacherous.” ² On September 16, Lake, with his brilliant staff round him, paid his famous visit to the Mughal Emperor, the poor, blind old man, sitting forlornly under a tattered canopy amidst the ruins of his palace—the same man who thirty-two years before had ridden off against the advice of Warren Hastings from Allahabad with an escort of Maratha horsemen. The Mughal Empire now definitely fell under the protecting shadow of the British *raj*. Lord Wellesley regarded this as more important for the results it prevented than those which it achieved. “The Mughal,” he wrote, “has never been an important or dangerous instrument in the hands of the Marathas, but . . . might have become a powerful aid to the cause of France under the direction of French agents.” ³ The Governor-General set himself to make such arrangements for the control and support of the fallen sovereign as would at once give him a generous allowance and a considerable measure of regal pomp, and yet at the same time curtail his actual power to the lowest point. Shah Alam was given a nominal sovereignty over territory in the immediate vicinity of Delhi ; but the real control was placed in the hands of a British Resident. The revenues were collected and justice administered in the name of the Emperor, and he was allowed to appoint a Diwan (i.e. finance officer) who was to attend the office of the collector, have access to the accounts and generally see that his master’s interests were not neglected. He was granted, in all, the generous allowance of 90,000 rupees (or £9000) a month for himself and his family. Muhammadan courts of law were to be established in Delhi, and no sentence of death was to be carried out without the

¹ Compton, *Military Adventurers of Hindustan*, p. 342.

² *Idem*, p. 309.

³ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iv, pp. 153-4.

Emperor's consent. Thus maintained by British revenues and supported by British bayonets, this mournful and impotent relic of the dynasty of Akbar—the titular Mughal Empire—lingered on till it was swept away in the cataclysm of the Mutiny in 1857.

On September 24 Lake marched from Delhi, and arrived at Muttra on October 2. Seven days later he made a treaty with the Raja of Bhartpur, and on October 18 captured Agra. This completed the conquest of Sindhia's territory on both banks of the Jumna. There still remained in being fifteen of Sindhia's regular battalions under a French commander named Dudrenec. Lake pursued them to the west of Agra with the whole of his cavalry, marching sixty-five miles in forty-eight hours—a wonderful feat under Indian skies. On November 1 he fought the Battle of Laswari, about eighty miles south of Delhi. Lake began the battle by attacking with cavalry only, then withdrew his horse and resumed the attack as his infantry came up. "The resistance opposed by the enemy," wrote Wellesley, "on this memorable occasion was more determined than any which the army under General Lake had experienced since the commencement of the campaign."¹ Lake himself declared: "These battalions are most uncommonly well appointed, have a most numerous artillery, as well served as they can possibly be, the gunners standing to their guns until killed by the bayonet, all the sepoys of the enemy behaved exceedingly well, and if they had been commanded by French officers, the event would have been, I fear, extremely doubtful. I never was in so severe a business in my life or anything like it, and pray to God I never may be in such a situation again: their army is better appointed than ours, no expense is spared whatever . . . these fellows fought like devils or rather like heroes."²

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iii, p. 554.

² *Idem*, p. 445.

Lake's success had been as brilliant in result as that of Arthur Wellesley in the Deccan, but his task was undoubtedly easier. "General Wellesley," writes Munro, "had greater difficulties to encounter, a greater body of infantry and artillery, a much more formidable cavalry, and all animated by the presence of their sovereign ; not dispirited by the desertion of their officers, like the northern army."¹

In the two minor theatres of war events were simple, but the objectives of both campaigns were fully attained. In Gujarat, where Colonel Murray was in command, Broach was captured by Woodington on August 29, and before the end of September all Sindhia's possessions were in our power. In Orissa on September 18 the port of Juggernaut was captured and Balasore surrendered. In October Cuttack was occupied, and all the province submitted.

The victory won, the question of the partition of conquests remained, and it no doubt occurred to Lord Wellesley that some claim might possibly be put forward, however absurd in fact, that the Nizam and the Peishwa, as allies of the British, had a right to participate in the material gains of the war. He himself raised the question in a long and elaborate despatch.² Arguing at great length, he decided that no allies of the British had any right to territory, but that it was expedient for the East India Company, as a gratuitous concession and of grace, to offer certain districts to Hyderabad and Poona. The Nizam indeed, by the Treaty of Hyderabad, would have possessed a right, had he fulfilled the stipulation of aiding the British armies, but he had "altogether failed in the discharge of the duties of an ally, and the conduct of his officers was of a nature actually hostile."³ Nevertheless

¹ Gleig, *Munro*, vol. i, p. 395.

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iv, pp. 85-99.

³ *Idem*, p. 88.

he was to be offered, from the former possessions of the Raja of Berar, all territories lying southward of Narnulla and Gawilgarh and westward of the river Warda, and, from the recent dominions of Sindhia, districts south of the Adjunta hills, such as Jalnapur and Gondapur. As for the Peishwa, his policy had been in some points "unaccommodating and vindictive," and in any case "the utmost limit" of his "just and reasonable expectations was attained in the preservation of his dominions, by the result of the war, from the violence and ambition of external and domestic enemies."¹ Yet to him, too, was to be offered a territorial *solatium*—the fort and district of Ahmadnagar. The beneficiaries received these donations in very different spirits, for while the Nizam acknowledged the "amicable and liberal spirit"² of the British government—and was indeed obviously surprised to be given anything at all—the Peishwa—who was in all probability equally astonished—to the high disgust and wrath of the Governor-General, "manifested a spirit of cavil and of inordinate pretension, wholly unbecoming his position," and so far forgot himself as to put forward claims "of a most extravagant and unreasonable nature."³ The British Resident was instructed to demonstrate the absurdity of these pretensions, and in the end both treaties of partition were accepted.

The protecting shadow of British power was now cast over those ancient Rajput houses, which had yielded so reluctantly to Sindhia's suzerainty and had long desired a connection with our government. Treaties of alliance were made with the Rajas of Jodpur, Jaipur, Macheri, Bundi and the Jat ruler of Bhartpur. The terms were unusually favourable as granted to ancient independent states, who of their own volition had freely sought our

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iv, p. 94.

² *Idem*, p. 97.

³ *Idem*, p. 98.

friendship and protection. No tribute was exacted and no internal interference was claimed. The Company guaranteed their dominions against aggression, and the allied states were merely called upon to defray the cost of any aid that might require to be rendered.

The treaties made with the Rana of Gohud and a chieftain known as Ambaji Rao Ingolia were more difficult to draw up. The Rana had been despoiled of his territories by Sindhia, who had handed them over in charge to Ambaji. Ambaji had subsequently risen in insurrection against his master and set up as an independent ruler. The solution finally adopted—a solution which, as we shall see, contained the seed of an embarrassing controversy—was that the territories were divided between the Rana and Ambaji, except that the mighty fortress of Gwalior, the most coveted of them all, was retained by the Company.

The success of the conquest and the settlement was remarkable. “With all the sanguine temper of my mind,” wrote Wellesley, “I declare that I could not have hoped for a completion of my plans at once so rapid and so secure,”¹ and he hardly exaggerated the bare facts when, with pardonable exultation, he declared: “With an unrivalled army, with flourishing resources, with powerful alliances and with a just cause, I was enabled to encounter and to surmount the difficulties which surrounded me, and to witness the rapid and complete effect of our military operations on every point of the enemy’s strength. The vast extent, complicated system, and matchless success of the campaigns in Hindustan and the Deccan, cannot be contemplated without emotions of gratitude and admiration.”² It is easy, of course, to criticize this language as excessively laudatory not only of Lord Wellesley’s own part in the business but of the efforts of his generals, on the

¹ Martin, *Wellesley’s Despatches*, vol. iii, p. 420.

² *Idem*, p. 584.

ground that the task accomplished was not difficult. But to do so is really unfair, when we remember how fatally easy it still was, as we shall see in the war with Holkar, for military disasters to occur and for serious mistakes to be made. This is the unfair dilemma often presented to statesmen and generals. If they succeed, their success is discounted owing to the facility of their task, and critics analyse the reasons of their triumph, till there is nothing left to be allotted to their personal share in it. If they fail, their failure is due to their own errors and miscalculations. The critic cannot have it both ways, and if the disasters of Monson and Lake in the war with Holkar are to be attributed—as they invariably are—to their own precipitation and misjudgement, the great and wonderful success in the war with Sindhia and the Raja of Berar must also be attributed to the initiative and effort of those who planned and waged it.

There were, of course, various subsidiary reasons for the British success. Munro, who wrote of the campaign as a whole : “ I never entertained any doubt that our success would be great, but I did not expect that it would have been so rapid,” gave amongst others the following as reasons for the British victory. In the first place, he says, “ our constant procession of victories is chiefly to be attributed to the Bengal and Madras armies having had a much greater body of regular cavalry than in any former war.” Secondly, as has been already mentioned, he rightly noticed the conduct of Lake and Wellesley in launching on the enemy attack after attack, without allowing them respite or opportunity to rally. Thirdly, he pointed out with truth that the Marathas had been weakened by their long dissensions. Sindhia had suffered heavily in his war with Holkar. Fourthly, there was a certain truth in his view that the Marathas, when fighting against English armies, gained nothing by the abandonment of their old

tactics of guerilla and predatory warfare. Their European training and their formation into battalions and divisions had rendered them invincible against other Indian powers, but had only rendered them capable of showing a determined resistance in defeat to European armies. Sindhia, says Munro, by the stress he had laid on infantry tactics had "reduced the war to a war of battles and sieges, instead of one of marches and convoys." One reason of this was that, as Grant Duff tells us, few if any of the men who made the fine resistance to Lake at Laswari were really Marathas by race. The armies of Sindhia and Holkar had long been recruited from any martial Indian stock that chose to fight under Maratha banners, and in this battle they were made up chiefly of the soldiers of Oudh, Rohilkhand and the Doab. With a certain truth, though also with a good deal of exaggeration, Munro could say of the Maratha army of this date : "Its discipline, its arms and uniform clothing, I regard merely as the means of dressing it out for the sacrifice." ¹

Lord Wellesley did not stand alone in recognition of the great extent of the victory. A contemporary writer paid a high tribute to the Governor-General, "who, in the most perilous crisis of its fate, by his extraordinary talents and energetic exertions, was, beyond the possibility of doubt or denial, the saviour of our Indian empire." ² Indeed, "the whole business of the Maratha war would have done honour to the days of a Burleigh, a Walsingham or of a Sully, in the Cabinet ; or of the plans of a Frederick in the field." ³ Even Munro himself, who was so often apt, as we have seen, to criticize and was not commonly swept away by undue enthusiasm, wrote : "We are now complete masters of India, and nothing can shake our power, if we take proper measures to confirm it." ⁴

¹ Gleig, *Munro*, vol. i, pp. 391-2.

³ *Idem*, p. 10.

² Britannicus, *A Letter . . .*, p. 92.

⁴ Gleig, *Munro*, vol. i, p. 395.

In a long despatch of July 13, 1804, Lord Wellesley turns aside from the first exultant estimate of his success to sum up soberly and concretely the advantages that he had gained. Besides the various detailed and obvious benefits due to the acquisition of new territories and the linking up of the presidencies of Bengal and Madras, he points out that the British power has now been finally placed "in that commanding position with regard to other states, which affords the only possible security for the permanent tranquillity and prosperity of these valuable and important possessions."¹ Further, by the establishment of subsidiary forces, an efficient army of 22,000 men is stationed within the territory, or on the frontier, of foreign states and is paid by foreign subsidies: "That army is constantly maintained in a state of perfect equipment, and is prepared for active service in any direction at the shortest notice. This force may be directed against any of the principal states of India, without the hazard of disturbing the tranquillity of the Company's possessions, and without requiring any considerable increase in the permanent military expenses of the Government of India." Finally, this force, together with the important privileges acquired of arbitrating the differences and dissensions between the several Indian states, "enables the British power to control the causes of that internal warfare, which during so long a term of years has desolated many of the most fertile provinces of India."²

These claims were justly made, but where Wellesley revealed a blindness, which looks almost wilful, was in the assumption, which is apparent both throughout this despatch and in his address to the inhabitants of Calcutta, that the Indian powers entirely acquiesced, and that the future was secure. The truth, of course, as Castlereagh had foreseen so clearly, was that in the hearts of the Maratha

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iv, p. 176.

² *Idem*, p. 177.

chiefs all possible benefits due to the *Pax Britannica* were outweighed by the fact that their power to plunder and destroy others was taken away from them. But this, for the moment, Lord Wellesley could not, or would not, see. "The peace, which has been concluded," he says, "comprehends every object of the war, with every practicable security for the continuance of tranquillity."¹ The first part of this sentence is entirely true, the second was a most dangerous assumption. He continually reiterates his confidence: "The foundations of our Empire in Asia are now laid in the tranquillity of surrounding nations, and in the happiness and welfare of the people of India";² and again a little later: "The influence and ascendancy of the British Government in the councils of Hyderabad and Poona have been increased and permanently established, not by limiting the authority, controlling the independence, or reducing the power of those states, but by the operation of arrangements which have confirmed and corroborated their respective rights, authorities and independence, extended their dominion, consolidated their power, and augmented their resources. . . . Our influence and ascendancy in the councils of those allies are now founded on the solid basis of their entire confidence in the equity and moderation of our views, and in their just reliance on our protecting power."³ This idyllic picture, it must be admitted, corresponded very imperfectly with the prosaic truth, and attributed to the Indian powers both an appreciation of the realities of the situation and a recognition of their own best interests which they were very far from possessing.

Meanwhile at home the comprehensiveness of Wellesley's plans and the accumulating impetus of his success aroused, to some extent, the admiration, but, in greater

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iii, p. 584.

² *Idem*, p. 586.

³ *Idem*, vol. iv, p. 175.

measure, the alarm of the Cabinet. In a despatch of May 21, 1804, Lord Castlereagh, though he has not yet heard the result of the war, observes that Wellesley's wonderful progress outdistances the attempts of the home government to consider the problems which he submits to them. Lately, "we were considering what plan of alliance was on the whole the most likely to connect us with the state of Poona and conciliate some of the other leading states, now we are to examine the effects upon our Indian system, not only of that state being occupied by a British force but of the other leading states, materially reduced in territory, being almost entirely encompassed either by the Company's possessions or those of their allies.¹ The question presented by the war, continued Castlereagh, was "the largest in its bearings, and the most important in its effects upon our Indian system that has ever come into discussion." Two important questions arose : first, whether the new acquisitions did not contravene too strongly the system of policy upon which the legislature has professed to act, i.e. whether they did not infringe the prohibitions against aggrandizement of the Acts of 1784 and 1793 ; and secondly, whether they did not make the frame of our government "complicated and unwieldy," so as to render it "enfeebled and embarrassed in ordinary hands" when Wellesley should have gone, and "when," said Castlereagh—assuaging the sting of the rebuke with the handsome compliment—the machine of government no longer feels "that impulse which every department of state so visibly receives from the mind that now directs it." ²

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iv, p. 223.

² *Idem*, p. 224.

CHAPTER XXI

THE WAR WITH HOLKAR

THE peace was soon at an end, and it is clear that Arthur Wellesley largely considered his brother to blame. He thought that a too strict and rigid interpretation was being put upon the treaties of Deogaon and Surji Arjangaon. Hardly more than a month after their conclusion we find him writing to Malcolm and complaining that the Commissioners appointed to carry out the treaties were trying to increase as much as possible the boundaries of the districts to be surrendered, and, added Wellesley, "the poor national faith goes to the devil. . . . I see very clearly that I have made two very good treaties of peace, but I have not influence to carry them into execution in any of their stipulations ; and there is no person about the Governor-General to take an enlarged view of the state of our affairs, and to resist the importunities of the local authorities to force on the treaties a construction which will tend to the increase of their own petty power and authority." ¹

Above all, Wellesley thought that his brother was making a serious mistake in claiming Gwalior under the treaty. The question about this place was rather complicated and subtle. The ninth clause of the Treaty of Surji Arjangaon had laid it down that Sindhia was not to be deprived of any territories southward of Jaipur, Jodpur and Gohud, of which he or his *Aumildars* had collected the revenues. Now, as we have seen, Gwalior had not been taken from Sindhia at all, but from a chieftain, Ambaji, who had formerly been his servant. Wellesley claimed, therefore, that Gwalior would not fall under the clause of

¹ Gurwood, *The Duke of Wellington's Indian Despatches*, vol. iii, p. 58.

the treaty above-mentioned, but most of his colleagues regarded it as a quibble to pretend that Ambaji was in any sense independent. Even Malcolm, Wellesley's close friend and secretary, declared : " If we determine a case of disputable nature in our own favour because we have power, we shall give a blow to our faith that will in my opinion be more injurious to our interests than the loss of fifty provinces." ¹ Arthur Wellesley himself wrote : " The Governor-General will, I know, bring forward an ingenious argument on which he will claim the fort ; but I am afraid that it will be too ingenious, and too much abstracted from all the circumstances of the case." ² In the same letter he said with his usual good sense that the question of right turned upon a nice point of the law of nations, but that as regarded the policy he had no doubts : " I would sacrifice Gwalior, or every frontier of India, ten times over, in order to preserve our credit for scrupulous good faith, and the advantages and honour we gained by the late war and the peace ; and we must not fritter them away in arguments, drawn from overstrained principles of the laws of nations, which are not understood in this country. What brought me through many difficulties in the war, and the negotiations for peace ? The British good faith and nothing else." ³ A few days later he writes : " My dear Malcolm, we shall have another war, and the worst of it will be, that all these questions will not bear inquiry." In regard to his brother's attitude to certain treaties made with the feudatories of the Raja of Berar, he goes so far as to say : " I am dispirited and disgusted with this transaction beyond measure ; however, I can say no more on it." ⁴

Finally, in a long and intimate letter to his brother

¹ (Sir) J. W. Kaye, *The Life and Correspondence of Sir John Malcolm*, 2 vols. London, 1856, vol. i, p. 267.

² Gurwood, *The Duke of Wellington's Indian Despatches*, vol. iii, p. 150.

³ *Idem*, p. 151.

⁴ Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, pp. 392-3.

Henry in May 1804, he writes that Sindhia's government, although it has concluded the defensive alliance, is not satisfied, "and the misfortune is that, between ourselves, I think we are in the wrong." Sindhia thinks that Gwalior should be given up, the Governor-General will not yield it: "I differ in opinion with the Governor-General both as to the right and policy of keeping this fort. . . . The Governor-General has argued with his usual ingenuity; but I acknowledge that I differ from him entirely. . . . From all this statement you will observe that the system of moderation and conciliation by which, whether it be right or wrong, I made the treaties of peace, and which has been so highly approved and extolled, is now given up. Our enemies are much disgusted, and complain loudly of our conduct and want of faith; and in truth, I consider the peace to be by no means secure. . . . In fact, my dear Henry, we want at Calcutta some person who will speak his mind to the Governor-General. Since you and Malcolm have left him, there is nobody about him with capacity to understand these subjects, who has nerves to discuss them with him, and to oppose his sentiments when he is wrong. There cannot be a stronger proof of this want than the fact that Malcolm and I, and General Lake, and Mercer, and Webbe, were of opinion that we had lost Gwalior with the treaty of peace." ¹ Such was the criticism of a loyal and affectionate brother, who clearly believed that there were occasions on which Lord Wellesley's high-minded but impatient personality led him astray. As we may suppose, the censure passed by strangers and political rivals was more bitter and outspoken. Philip Francis rose in the House of Commons in April 1805 to direct a bitter invective against the terms granted in the treaty with Sindhia. "The reluctance shown," he said, "against the proud and insolent terms of our treaty was

¹ Owen, *Wellington's Despatches*, pp. 395-7.

natural . . . was it not natural for a high-spirited chief to spurn at terms so abject ? ” ¹

We must now return to the position of affairs at the end of the year 1803. Wellesley, having crushed, with a success that was probably beyond even his own hopes, two of the great Maratha chieftains, was anxious to neutralize and isolate the third. Holkar had so far stood aloof from the war, watching, partly no doubt with secret satisfaction, partly also with sullen resentment, the defeat of those who, though they were his bitter rivals, were also after all his fellow-countrymen. It seemed to the Governor-General that Holkar might conceivably agree to accept a peace with the British government which would leave him the most independent of the Maratha powers, though it would necessarily curtail his opportunities of plundering and despoiling his neighbours, but here he was making the common mistake of supposing that an Indian chief would necessarily be guided by a policy that was reasonable and in accordance with his own best interests. Holkar was puffed up by extreme presumption, due no doubt partly to the fact that he had been carefully left alone in the recent war. He could not believe that this immunity was due to any other reason than fear of his power. Therefore, in March 1804, his envoys laid before the British government four proposals : First, that Holkar should be permitted to collect *chouth*, or the legalized Maratha blackmail levied by armed bands upon subject territories. Secondly, that the ancient possessions formerly held by his family, such as Etawa, twelve districts in the Doab, and territory in Bundelkhand, should be made over to him. Thirdly, that the district known as Hurriana should be retroceded to him. Fourthly and lastly, that a guarantee should be given him for all the territories then in his possession and a treaty concluded

¹ Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. iv, p. 232.

on the same terms as with Sindhia. These insolent proposals—for they were nothing else, considering the situation in which Holkar found himself—were absolutely rejected, and Holkar was told that an immediate return to his own dominions was an indispensable preliminary to any negotiations. “I never was so plagued,” wrote Lake, “as I am with this Devil; he just, nay hardly, keeps within the letter of the law, by which means our army is remaining in the field at an enormous expense.”¹ Meanwhile Holkar had sent his defiance to the Commander-in-Chief in the Deccan as well as to the Governor-General. He had written to Arthur Wellesley demanding the restoration of certain provinces in southern India. If his request was not acceded to, he declared that “countries of many hundred *coss* [a *coss* is an Indian measure of length varying considerably in different parts of India, but being generally equal to a distance of two miles] should be overrun and plundered and burnt. That he [meaning the Commander-in-Chief] should not have leisure to breathe for a moment, and that calamities should fall on lacs of human beings . . . by the attacks of Holkar’s army which overwhelms like the waves of the sea.”²

Holkar now steeled himself to approach Sindhia, who, still in high dudgeon at his defeat, replied with very natural indignation that, even if he were inclined to violate his faith with his ally, the character and treachery of Holkar would prevent his doing so. Sindhia followed up this crushing rejoinder by communicating Holkar’s proposals to the British government. Lord Wellesley now recognized that war was inevitable, and in a despatch to the home government³ he gives the following reasons for that fact, though we must add that he had taken none of

¹ Martin, *Wellesley’s Despatches*, vol. iv, pp. 46-7.

² *Idem*, p. 107.

³ *Idem*, pp. 99-130.

them into account in his sanguine forecast after the conclusion of the recent war. He points out in the first place that Holkar was bound to satisfy his turbulent soldiery by finding somewhere lands for them to plunder ; secondly, the various petty states which before this had formed the marauding-ground of the great Maratha chieftains had now been formally taken under the protection of the East India Company ; thirdly, since the treaties had been concluded with Sindhia and the Raja of Berar—treaties which transformed those robber chieftains into at least the semblance of civilized rulers—many of their irregular troops and turbulent followers, highly disapproving of this process, had determined to join their fortunes with those of Holkar. “ The reduction,” said Wellesley, “ of that predatory power therefore was manifestly a measure, not only of just policy and necessary security, but of ultimate economy with reference to the finances of the honourable Company.”¹

On April 16 the Governor-General ordered the commencement of hostilities against Holkar both in Hindustan and the Deccan. These operations had been as carefully planned beforehand and as accurately thought out as the victorious campaign of the year 1803. “ The basis of that plan,” writes Wellesley, “ was a combination of the movements and operations of the British troops and those of Daulat Rao Sindhia and the Gaikwar, acting against the forces and territories of Holkar from Gujarat, Malwa and the Deccan, while the main army, under the personal direction of His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, pursued the enemy from Hindustan.”² But the issue was very different from the victorious results of the war against Sindhia and the Raja of Berar. The course of events in outline was as follows ; four main phases may be distinguished. At first Holkar was driven southward, and

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iv, p. 117.

² *Idem*, p. 322.

Wellesley's plans seemed likely to be everywhere successful. The pursuing forces during the rains rested temporarily, partly in an advanced base, partly in their main quarters at Cawnpore. Then—the second phase—came Colonel Monson's premature and ill-judged advance into the desert of Rajputana, followed by his disastrous retreat. The third phase sees Holkar marching northward again on the flood-tide of success, but the British cause was re-established by the successful defence of Delhi, and the victories at Dig and Farruckabad. Then—the final phase—came Lake's ghastly military blunder of flinging four successive storming parties upon the ramparts of Bhartpur before his artillery had effected a breach, and his consequent failure to take that great fortress. The failure might easily have been repaired ; it caused an altogether disproportionate sensation in contemporary opinion, but the home authorities had long been dreading even a continuation of Wellesley's successes, and the first indications of failure were seized upon by them as a reason for his recall.

So much for the results in outline. We must now retrace our steps and narrate the course of events more in detail. In April 1804 Holkar was engaged in plundering the territory of the Raja of Jaipur, which is situated about 150 miles south-west of Delhi. General Lake advanced against him, sending Monson with a vanguard one day's march ahead. At the same time Colonel Murray was told to advance north-eastward from Gujarat into Malwa, and Sindhia was warned to co-operate. Holkar was forced to retreat to Kotah, which he reached on April 23, his situation being "in the utmost degree wretched and distressed."¹ The British followed up their success by capturing Rampura on March 16 under Colonel Don. According to some authorities, for instance Mr. J. C. Marshman and Sir J. W. Fortescue, the first mistake was

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iv, p. 122.

made by Lake in not pressing on in pursuit himself, "an act of unaccountable imprudence."¹ Lake himself, however, believed that Holkar's flight was too rapid to be successfully followed up and that he had gained too long a start to be brought to action. Besides this, Lake's soldiers had suffered terribly from the heat. During some days of the advance the thermometer had stood at 130° in the shade. He determined, therefore, to postpone active operations till after the rains, to withdraw the army, or at least the main part of it, from its advanced position and to confine himself for the present to excluding Holkar from Hindustan. Monson was ordered to occupy the passes of Bundi and Lacheri to the south of Rampura and north of Kotah, so as "completely (to) obstruct the return of Holkar in that direction."² These passes had been selected because, as Lake pointed out, they afforded the only entrance through the mountains from Malwa into Hindustan. Lake, in fact, considered that he had firmly locked the gate of admission to Northern India. He withdrew himself to Cawnpore at the end of June. "The situation," he wrote, "appeared to secure all the advantages which had been obtained, and to obviate every danger that could accrue . . . from the absence of the main army."³ It was also assumed by Lake in coming to his decision that Holkar had suffered severely in his flight, that the British force in Gujarat under Murray could act offensively when need arose, and that Sindhia would co-operate on the side of Malwa. But Lake had perhaps forgotten how soon an Indian army could recover from such a disaster as Holkar had experienced ; he possibly relied too much on the energy and initiative of Colonel Murray ; and he rather left out of account the certainty

¹ Marshman, *History of India*, vol. ii, p. 97.

² Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iv, p. 123. See map, p. 248 *infra*.

³ *Idem*, vol. v, p. 286.

that Sindhia's enthusiasm for war would wane as the British attack slackened.

Still, taking everything into account, it seems reasonable to suppose that, if Lake's instructions had been faithfully followed, operations would have been resumed after the rains with every prospect of success. "Unfortunately," as Lake himself wrote, "my views were defeated by Colonel Monson's departure from the plan which I intended him to pursue."¹ The fatal step referred to was taken by Monson in June, who, not content with his safe defensive position, determined to march forward and enter Holkar's territory. Lake declares that as soon as the news reached him he expressed his strong disapproval and his lively apprehension of the consequences. It seemed to him, however, that the step once having been taken his only proper course was to support his subordinate. Though Monson's reasons did not appear to him to be satisfactory, yet he was disposed to allow considerable latitude to his judgement as being best able to know the circumstances.

Monson crossed the River Chambal and marched by Kotah to the Mokundra Pass, thirty miles from Kotah. After a short halt there he advanced fifty miles farther to the fort of Hinglasgarh, where he arrived on July 1. Two days later he moved his camp still a little farther forward in a southerly direction from Hinglasgarh to a point about seventy miles distant from Ujjein. It seems that the second great mistake made by Monson was the advance beyond the Mokundra Pass, which would have been the best place to halt after he had abandoned his first base at Bundi and Lacheri. He hoped, however, to get into touch with Colonel Murray, who, marching from Gujarat upon Ujjein, had reached Dohud in June and Budnawar on June 30—the day before Monson arrived at Hinglasgarh.

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. v, p. 287.

At this point, unfortunately, Colonel Murray decided to fall back behind the River Myhie, and the result, as we shall see, was an entirely useless retreat followed by a second advance—movements which prevented him from supporting Monson at a most critical time, and recalled the unhappy marching and counter-marching of General d'Erlon in the Waterloo campaign. Murray began his retreat to the Myhie on July 1; on the 5th, however, he completely changed his mind and advanced again, this time as far as Ujjein. He arrived there on July 8, the very day on which, as will appear hereafter, Monson, despairing of his appearance, began his retreat to the Mokundra Pass.

What were the reasons for Murray's retreat? He tells us himself that at Budnawar he had just heard of Lake's return with his army to Cawnpore and the intention of Monson to halt at the Mokundra Pass. He thought, further, that it was impossible to oppose the whole force of Holkar without the cavalry of the Gaikwar of Baroda and of Sindhia, in regard to which he had been disappointed. Lastly, he considered his position at Budnawar to be unfavourable.¹ Lake either never heard these reasons or considered them inadequate, for he wrote: "For reasons which have never been satisfactorily explained to me, Colonel Murray, after he had advanced within a short distance of Ujjein, formed the extraordinary resolution of retreating behind the Myhie river."² Sir J. W. Fortescue, though he admits that, if Murray's decision "be reviewed from a strictly theoretic standpoint, it seems difficult to quarrel with it,"³ considers that Murray was, on the whole, as was afterwards proved, both incapable and unenterprising. Murray's retreat, of course, enabled the

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iv, pp. 374-5.

² *Idem*, vol. v, p. 288.

³ Fortescue, *History of the British Army*, vol. v, p. 82.

enemy to concentrate the whole of his force against Monson, to whose fortunes we must now return.

On July 7 Monson heard two serious pieces of news : the first that Colonel Murray was falling back behind the Myhie River (he did not, of course, know, for the news had not yet reached him, that Murray had already changed his mind) ; and secondly, that Holkar had crossed the Chambal from the left bank and was therefore threatening his flank. Lake considered that Monson, as he had at one time intended, ought to have attacked Holkar while he was fording the river. But a daring scheme of this nature, which, if it held out splendid possibilities of success, yet undoubtedly involved serious risk of disaster, was entirely beyond the mediocre range of a commander like Monson. He could only see the peril and not the faint prospect of victory, and so he determined to make his way back to the Mokundra Pass, not knowing that on that very day Murray's leading columns were entering the outskirts of Ujjein. At the pass, where he arrived on July 9, Monson turned for a moment and repulsed Holkar's cavalry. But he was in dread that Holkar would get behind his rear and cut him off from communications with Kotah ; so he continued his retreat to that town, arriving there on July 12, with his troops in an exhausted and dispirited condition. When Wellesley heard of the abandonment of the pass, he wrote, with a sense of foreboding that proved all too well justified : " This is a most painful state of affairs. Nothing can retrieve our character but the most vigorous efforts. I fear that all our exertions will now be too late to recover all we have lost." ¹

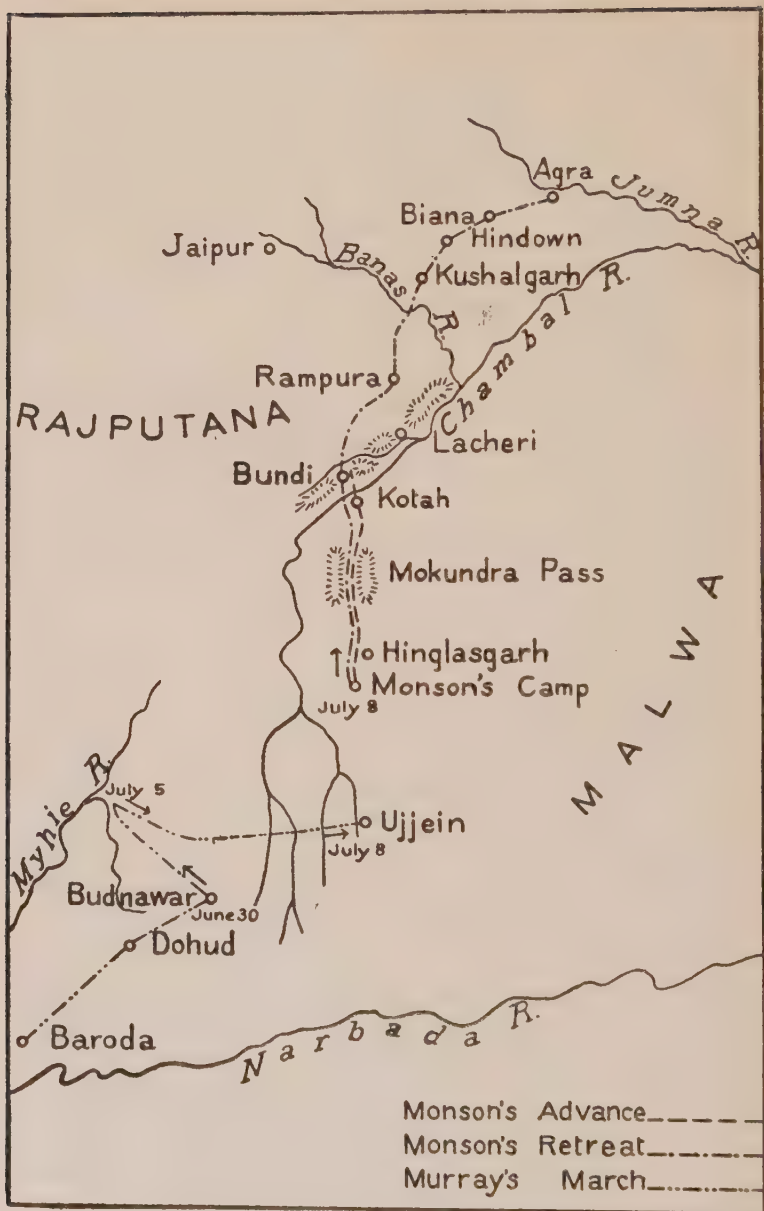
The Raja of Kotah, now that the clouds of disaster seemed to hang over the British cause, dared not receive them, and they had to struggle on to a fort on the banks of the Chambal, seven miles farther on. The river was

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iv, p. 182.

crossed, and on July 16 the heavy guns were spiked and abandoned. On the 27th Monson reached Rampura. There he received reinforcements, but it was impossible, owing to the increasing and ever more daring assaults of Holkar's marauding hordes, to obtain supplies, so that he was obliged to continue the retreat to Kushalgarh. Leaving a small garrison at Rampura, he reached the Banas River on August 24. The British forces were attacked at a disadvantage while crossing the river, were forced to abandon their baggage, and reached Kushalgarh on August 25. Monson was now almost surrounded by a cloud of the enemy's horse, and was subjected to never-ending attacks, but he struggled on to Hindown Fort, which he reached on August 27. Worn out with fatigue and hunger, his troops wearily threaded the Biana Pass on the 28th, but they were almost at the end of their tether, and finally on August 31 the broken army streamed into Agra in utter demoralization and disorder.

It is no wonder that Lake bemoaned "this disgraceful and disastrous event." "I have lost," he wrote, "five battalions and six companies, the flower of the army, and how they are to be replaced at this day, God only knows."¹ Arthur Wellesley criticizes the episode with his usual dispassionate insight and reasonableness: "I am decidedly of opinion that Monson advanced without reason, and retreated in the same manner; and that he had no intelligence of what was passing five miles from his camp. It is a curious circumstance that Monson and the Commander-in-Chief should attribute their misfortunes to Murray's retreat, and that Murray should attribute his retreat to a movement of the same kind made by Monson. At all events, both parties appear to have been afraid of Holkar, and both to have fled from him in different directions. I do not think," concluded Arthur

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iv, p. 197.



SKETCH MAP OF MONSON'S ADVANCE AND RETREAT.

J. H. Astle

Wellesley drily, "that the Commander-in-Chief and I have carried on war so well by our deputies as we did ourselves."¹ Arthur Wellesley indeed, though he could criticize the conduct of the commander in this reasonable and indulgent spirit, by no means underrated the seriousness of the episode, for he says elsewhere: "Monson's disasters are really the greatest and most disgraceful to our military character of any that have ever occurred."² Some time later he passed further well-considered criticisms on the whole operation, pointing out that Monson's force was to begin with not of sufficient strength, that it had with it no proper provisions, and that it was dependent for supplies on certain Rajas who for interested reasons urged it to advance. No proper measures were taken, as they ought to have been, to collect depôts of provisions and stores at Bundi or Kotah or Rampura. The expedition advanced too far from its base over difficult ground crossed and cleft by impassable rivers and deep *nullahs*. Finally, he concluded that "the detachment must have been lost, even if Holkar had not attacked them with his infantry and artillery."³

Dr. Horace Wilson refuses to attribute all the blame to the unfortunate commander, and clearly considers that some portion of it must fall upon General Lake. "It is clear," he says, "that all the fault was not Monson's, that very much of it was Murray's, and that both had been placed in an awkward position by those who planned their operations. Each was advanced to a great distance from effective support, with a force insufficient to encounter the enemy, by whom they were separated, and whose strength was greatly and fatally miscalculated by the Commander-in-Chief." Later, Wilson says: "It is clear . . . that

¹ Gurwood, *The Duke of Wellington's Indian Despatches*, vol. iii, p. 396.

² Owen, *Wellesley's Despatches*, p. 788.

³ Gurwood, *The Duke of Wellington's Indian Despatches*, vol. iii, p. 412.

Monson was in insufficient strength, but it is also evident that he advanced with great imprudence, and with very imperfect information.”¹ Summing up, it may be said that the main and original fault was Monson’s, for he took upon himself the very serious responsibility of transgressing the careful orders given him. It is possible, of course, that, as Dr. Wilson says, he had been advanced by Lake to too great a distance, but that is a very inadequate reason for advancing further still. We can never know whether, if Monson had stayed where he was posted, Lake could or could not have advanced in due time to relieve him, and continued a combined march against the enemy. But Lake had every reason to maintain that this course was perfectly possible, and that if his subordinates had rendered him the obedience on which he had every right to count, final success would have been assured. We may also perhaps note that Monson was singularly deficient in the characteristic virtues both of Arthur Wellesley and of Lake himself. If Wellesley had been in his position, we may be well assured that he would not have advanced beyond his first station ; or alternatively, that if he had, he would have shown all that characteristic care and solicitude which he always displayed in guarding his communications and preparing, stage by stage, for his forward advance. If Lake had been in Monson’s position, it was conceivable, in fact it was perhaps probable, that he too would have refused to remain posted at Bundi and Lacheri ; but, having dared, he would have dared all, and would probably by a brilliant onslaught upon Holkar, as he was crossing the Chambal, have won pardon for his past strategical mistakes and silenced the voices of criticism in pæans of victory.

There is one fine aspect of the whole business which should not escape our notice—namely, the refusal of either

¹ Mill, *History of India*, vol. vi, pp. 409-10.

Wellesley or Lake to indulge in those recriminations which so often follow on disappointments and disasters of this kind. I have already quoted Wellesley's magnanimous words on the man who had by his precipitation brought near to ruin his cherished plans, but I may refer to them here again : " Whatever the result of his misfortunes to my own fame, I will endeavour to shield his character from obloquy, nor will I attempt the mean purpose of sacrificing his reputation to save mine." ¹ Lake, too, was not slow with a certain nobility to take the blame on his own shoulders. " My dear Lord," he wrote to the Governor-General, " all blame ought to fall upon me for detaching the force in the first instance . . . all censure for that measure must be attributed to me and to me alone, and if called upon I am ready to answer for it before the House of Commons. . . . I stand perfectly at ease on that score, unless it may be said that I left too much to the discretion of Colonel Monson." ² Finally, Monson himself wrote to Lake : " I beg leave to declare to your Excellency in the most solemn manner that if there is any culpability, I am alone the aggressor." ³

The disaster of the retreat enabled Holkar to return with all his forces, flushed with victory, to Hindustan. He marched northwards and encamped a short distance from Muttra, about forty miles above Agra on the River Jumna. General (now Lord) Lake⁴ advanced from Cawnpore on September 3 via Agra, to join battle if possible. Holkar did not await his coming, but withdrew north-west along the Jumna with Lake in hot pursuit. The enemy arrived before Delhi on October 8 and made a desperate attempt to capture it, but it was splendidly defended by Burn and Ochterlony. On Lake's approach,

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iv, p. 205.

² *Idem*, p. 241.

³ British Museum. *Addit. MSS.* 13857, p. 36.

⁴ He was created Baron Lake of Delhi and Leswarree and of Aston Clinton in Buckinghamshire, September 1, 1804.

October 28, Holkar was forced to raise the siege. His infantry and cavalry retired towards Dig, thirty miles west of Muttra, a fort belonging to the Raja of Bhartpur, while Holkar himself with his cavalry crossed the Jumna with the obvious intention of raiding the fertile Doab—the land between the Jumna and the Ganges—and then penetrating either into Oudh or Rohilkhand. Lake was confronted by a rather difficult problem, which he solved by dividing his forces into two. Colonel Frazer, with the infantry, artillery and two native cavalry regiments, was sent against Dig, while Lake himself, with the cavalry, pursued Holkar into the Doab. It was, of course, vitally necessary—and here speed was everything—to prevent the ravaging and plundering of that province and the territories of our allies. Holkar was headed off in an attempt to cross the Ganges into Rohilkhand ; he flew down the Doab and arrived at Farruckabad on November 16. Lake came up with him next day, having by a most brilliant military feat marched fifty-eight miles in twenty-four hours. Holkar was utterly defeated and narrowly escaped to Dig. Wellesley had some reason for his complacent reflection on Lake's brilliant forced march : " The result of this extraordinary and successful pursuit has proved that the most rapid movements, even of the Maratha horse, cannot avail against the celerity and discipline of our cavalry under its present improved construction." ¹

Meanwhile, on November 13, Frazer, who was mortally wounded in the action, completely defeated the rest of Holkar's army before Dig. The command on Frazer's death devolved on Monson, who had the satisfaction of recovering in this battle the guns he had lost in his retreat. But even in the moment of victory he showed that fatal streak of irresolution which was so characteristic of him.

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iv, p. 350.

Instead of attacking the fortress of Dig, he astonished everyone by falling back on Agra. "It is somewhat extraordinary," wrote Lake, "that a man brave as a lion should have no judgement or reflection . . . it really grieves me to see a man I esteem after gaining credit in the extreme throw it away in such a manner immediately." ¹ Lake now rejoined the army before Dig and the fort was captured on Christmas Eve. Both divisions of Holkar's army had now been completely defeated, and in the meantime Holkar had been deprived of all his possessions south of the River Tapti, which had been gradually occupied by the armies of the Deccan. His cause seemed lost, and it is quite clear that he was only saved from utter destruction by the treachery of the Raja of Bhartpur and the equivocal attitude of Sindhia, who began to think that he could not afford to see Holkar crushed. Even then no great harm would have been done, for the machinations of these two rulers could only at the best have postponed our victory for a few months, had it not been for Lake's mad attempt to carry Bhartpur, one of the greatest fortresses in the north of India, by direct assault. Between January 9 and February 21 he launched four separate storming attacks, all of which were repulsed with terrible loss. It was an appalling blunder, and unpardonable because it was unnecessary. Arthur Wellesley, loth as he must have been to criticize his late Commander-in-Chief, could not restrain himself from saying : "They must have blundered that siege terribly, for it is certain that with adequate means every place can be taken." ² He hinted what was almost certainly true, that it was the impetuosity of Lake's temper which would not brook the delay necessary for a proper preliminary breach of the walls before the storm. It is by this episode that Lake, for all his dash and

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iv, p. 246.

² Fortescue, *History of British Army*, vol. v, p. 126.

brilliancy, has stamped himself as a commander infinitely inferior to his great rival Arthur Wellesley. "One," says Sir J. W. Fortescue, "of Britain's greatest fighting generals. But here the praise of Lake must end. The siege of Bhartpur stands out as a sad example of his impatience and his love of rough-and-ready methods ; but the despatch of Monson's detachment on its isolated march to the south remains a still greater blot upon his fame.¹ For this measure showed that he had not studied his enemy, nor thought out the means of making every movement of the campaign contribute to his ruin. His fault, it is true, was not greater than Napoleon's when he sent Dupont's corps in similar circumstances to Andalusia, and it was perhaps a misfortune for Lake that such a man as Arthur Wellesley should have been his rival in the field ; but against the background of Wellesley's achievements the defects of Lake become very conspicuous. If it were only Assaye that were to be compared with Laswari, the elder general would have nothing to fear ; but beneath Assaye is the solid structure of communications thoroughly guarded, magazines and advance bases carefully stored, transport laboriously organized ; everything provided that prudence and sagacity could foresee, nothing left to chance which could be assured by industry and care."²

To Lord Wellesley, Lake's failure came as a terrible and culminating blow, for he knew full well the use that his enemies would make of it. For all that, his letter to Lake of March 9, 1805, though some confession of his disappointment is wrung from him, exhibits a generous refusal to reproach the Commander-in-Chief. "I fear," he writes, "that we have despised the place and enemy

¹ I have given reasons above for venturing to consider this particular charge unfounded.

² Fortescue, *History of British Army*, vol. v, pp. 136-7.

so much as to render both formidable. . . . Your Lordship will judge of my sufferings amidst all the vexations which have fallen upon me in a manner so miraculous and distressing.”¹ Wellesley indeed, with his extraordinarily clear insight into the realities of political situations, saw quite clearly that, however lamentable these episodes might be, they had not really given his enemy the victory. “The power of Jeswant Rao Holkar,” he said, in the despatch conveying to the Court of Directors the news of Lake’s failure, “is destitute of any solid foundation, and of every element of an established government.”² The truth of this view was proved by the fact that the Raja of Bhartpur himself, in spite of his amazing success, seeing his ultimate defeat was inevitable, made a treaty with the British on April 17, 1805, with the result that Holkar was constrained to leave his territory. Wellesley’s conclusion, therefore, was entirely justified: “The war with Holkar has not only not affected the general system of our political relations, but has demonstrated the utility of those relations in their application to the increase of our resources and power against our enemies. Under every possible advantage . . . the disturbances excited by Holkar have not shaken the great foundations of the alliances established in Hindustan and the Deccan.”³ But it is not everyone who through the black clouds of war and defeat can take such long, sedate and imperturbable views of a dark and threatening future, and these calm and courageous words fell upon deaf and alienated ears at home.

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iv, p. 302.

² *Idem*, p. 487.

³ *Idem*, vol. v, p. 236.

CHAPTER XXII

LORD WELLESLEY'S RESIGNATION

AT home there had been a growing resistance for the last few years, both in Parliament and still more in the Court of Directors, to a policy of war and aggression in India. The latter bitterly complained of Wellesley's neglect to keep them informed of his actions. "We are the more impressed," they wrote, "with this neglect, as His Lordship, after announcing to us, in his despatch of the 20th June 1803, the then critical state of the discussions between the British government and the Maratha powers, preserved, after hostilities commenced, and nearly throughout the entire period of the war, upon grounds which appear to us altogether unsatisfactory, a silence of nearly five months, whilst we were receiving from every quarter, except that from which of all others we had a right to expect it, even from the Calcutta Gazettes themselves . . . details of events in India, without any intermediate advices from our Governor-General in Council." ¹ Castlereagh was driven to make a like complaint. He wrote in December 1804: "We have received . . . a voluminous detail of all the measures of the late war now twelve months terminated, but to my utter surprise and regret not a line either public or private upon the war then in existence with Holkar. You may imagine how much this has aggravated former impressions both with regard to the Governor-General and his colleagues." ²

In March 1804 we find Philip Francis saying in Parlia-

¹ India Office Records, *Despatch to Bengal*, November 28, 1804.

² India Office Records, *Home Miscellaneous Series*, 504, p. 130.

at Lord Wellesley's departure



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1. Upper Doab 2. Lower Doab 3. Coimbatore



ment : " Since the prohibitory Act passed in 1784, I appeal to the House whether we have heard of anything from India but war and conquest ; many victories, and great acquisitions, with only now and then a short interval of repose, to take breath and begin again . . . almost all these wars are supposed to originate in acts of provocation and aggression committed by the weak against the strong. . . . It requires very clear evidence to make it credible, that whereas the disposition of the British power in India is always, if possible, to preserve the peace . . . this excellent disposition is never suffered to prevail because the Indian princes are so restless and unruly, that we cannot, in common justice to ourselves, refrain from invading them. The fable says : ' the fierce, rebellious lamb would never suffer the mild, gentle, moderate wolf to be quiet.' " ¹ In April 1805 Francis declared that our resources were consumed in ruinous conquests, the flower of our troops were cut off, fighting unnecessary battles.² Nearly a year later, in March 1806, he pointed out how helpless Parliament was to check and moderate such a career as Wellesley's : " An act done ten or twelve months ago, many hundred miles north-west of Calcutta, falls under the consideration of the House. After many adjournments, and sundry debates too, either here or at the India House, some rapid resolution is taken in three or four months. Another year carries back the echo of the first intelligence from London to Lucknow, to Agra, to Delhi, to Ujjein, or Nagpur. Why, Sir, long before it is possible for the act or resolution here to reach its destination, a brilliant victory has put an end not only to the original question, but to all the adverse parties concerned in it. The survivors, if any are left, and if any of them can read English, may find a sufficient consolation, where they

¹ Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. i, pp. 866-7.

² *Idem*, vol. iv, p. 225.

are not very likely to look for it, in the English newspapers, namely that all such proceedings are severely condemned by the British Parliament.”¹

These attacks no doubt represented a fairly large section of public opinion, and, though the vindictive nature of Francis was by this time well enough understood for men largely to discount any pronouncement he made on India, yet, as time went on, the answer of the government in defence of Wellesley tended to grow weaker and less convincing. They no doubt themselves began to dread the issue of these constant military operations, which seemed now for the first time to be somewhat clouded by chequered fortunes, if not by actual disasters. The wars and accessions of territory of course involved serious expense, and although to-day we should think that expense amazingly small, it must be remembered that Great Britain was in the midst of the Napoleonic wars, and that the British people actually expected—however unreasonable that expectation seems to us now—that, despite the war, actual monetary profits should annually be made out of the Company’s possessions in India. They failed to understand that a reasonable public debt in India, contracted for the waging of war, could easily be borne by the revenues of so wealthy a Company. They failed also to realize that considerable expenditure at certain stages might be the surest economy, if it were preparing the way for later developments. Wellesley himself claimed that the prevalent ideas of Indian debt were much exaggerated, and he asked that “commercial prejudice and the eager desire of temporary mercantile advantage” should not be allowed “to contract the comprehensive scale of our military preparations.”² It was affirmed in the House of Commons in 1804 that in five years the Company’s

¹ Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. vi, p. 392.

² Martin, *Wellesley’s Despatches*, vol. iii, p. 194.

debts had increased by eleven millions. Francis complained that since 1793 the public had never received more than one year's participation in the revenues of India. It will be remembered, by the Act passed in that year, half a million sterling was to be paid to the state out of any surplus left to the Company after the payment of expenses, dividends and any other legitimate charges. "Parliament," said Francis, "ought to inquire how it happens that, out of a territorial revenue of thirteen millions, added to the profits of a flourishing trade at home, there is no surplus to make good to the public so inconsiderable a share in that immense receipt as half a million a year." "Our Indian prosperity," he continued, "is always in the future tense. I must do him [Castlereagh] the justice to admit that in every respect but one he seems to me to be the full and legitimate successor of the noble lord [i.e. Dundas, now Lord Melville] who for many years presided at the same Board. He has succeeded to the office, to the promises, to the hopes, to the estimates, to the sanguine disposition of that noble lord and to his perpetual disappointments."¹ By 1806, when Wellesley laid down his office, the debt had increased from seventeen millions in the year 1797 to a total sum of thirty-one millions—an amount which, to those accustomed to the cost of modern war, would seem negligible in view of the vast acquisitions made to the Indian Empire.

Further, it must be confessed that Wellesley had treated the Directors with unwise hauteur and contempt. He was too fond, as we have shown in the case of Fort William College, of attempting to commit them to a course of action up to a point where it was almost impossible for them to exercise any right of withdrawal. In his private or semi-official communications to the President of the Board of Control he threw off all restraint in the language

¹ Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. ii, p. 989.

he permitted himself to use of those who were after all his employers. He proclaimed to Lord Castlereagh in March 1804 his "utter contempt" of any opinions that might be entertained by the Directors, and added : "I expect every practicable degree of injustice and baseness from that faction." He relies upon Castlereagh's justice and public spirit "to frustrate the vindictive profligacy of the Court of Directors," and concludes by writing : "Your Lordship . . . may be assured, that as no symptoms of tardy remorse displayed by the Honourable Court in consequence of my recent success in India, will vary my present estimation of the faith and honour of my very worthy and approved good masters, or protract my continuance in India for one hour beyond the limits prescribed by the public interests, so no additional outrage, injury, or insult, which can issue from the most loathesome den of the India House, will accelerate my departure, while the public safety shall appear to require my aid in this arduous situation." On March 25, 1805, he writes in a like strain : "The motives of the conduct of my personal enemies at the India House are sufficiently evident ; and my expectations from that quarter are rather disappointed by any transient and momentary gleam of justice and reason, which may accidentally appear in the general tumult of personal prejudice and vindictive fury." The constitutional question as between the Board of Control, the Court of Directors and the Governor-General will be fully discussed in the next chapter.

Again, sooner or later it was inevitable after such wars that a demand should be put forward by the military authorities for an augmentation of the Indian armies. Wellesley writes in 1800 that the forces in India consist only of sixteen royal regiments of infantry, amounting to eleven thousand men, European regiments in the Company's service, consisting of two thousand five hundred,

and in addition a Swiss regiment of six hundred. He computes that the total European infantry only amounted to fourteen thousand men, of whom, owing to casualties and ill-health, only ten thousand five hundred could be counted on at any one time as ready to take the field. He considered that what was required was an additional force in all of eighteen thousand men—six thousand for Bengal, eight thousand for the coast of Coromandel and Mysore, four thousand for Bombay, the western coast and Ceylon. In India, owing to the climate and the numerous temptations that beset European troops, large deductions had always to be made for invalids and ineffectives. Wellesley therefore proposed that the European infantry should be fixed at twenty-five regiments of twelve hundred rank and file, the whole amounting to thirty thousand men, “which number, according to past experience, would be requisite in order at all times to furnish a force of eighteen thousand men for field service.”¹ All the European infantry should be King’s troops, and the Company’s European infantry should be converted into artillery, drafted into His Majesty’s forces, or sent back to Europe. The cavalry should consist of eight regiments of dragoons. Dundas, the President of the Board of Control, naturally opposed these demands. “For my own part,” he wrote, “I consider an overgrown and unwieldy load of Indian debt as our only mortal foe.”² He professed himself “truly alarmed at such a suggestion.” It would be impossible to accept it without making the Indian Empire a burden upon the Mother Country. He pointed out that in 1796 the establishment of all forces in India amounted to eighty thousand men. On Wellesley’s scale this number would be raised to a hundred and forty-two thousand, and the additional cost would be half

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. ii, p. 364.

² *Idem*, vol. v, Supplement, Miscellaneous, p. 160.

a million sterling per annum. He definitely criticized Wellesley's proposals under three heads. First, Wellesley assumed that one-quarter of the nominal establishment must be deducted for sickness and incapacity. Even if this were so, his calculation appears faulty, for thirty thousand men less by one-quarter of that number leaves twenty-two thousand five hundred, and not eighteen thousand, and therefore it would appear that twenty regiments, not twenty-five, would be required. In the second place, Dundas holds that the deduction of one-quarter is too high. It would appear that one-sixth, possibly one-eighth, would be the right proportion, and therefore eighteen regiments of twelve thousand men would meet the necessities of the case. Thirdly, Dundas even doubts whether so large a number as eighteen thousand men is required. Wellesley had argued that the establishment of our military forces should increase in proportion to the extent of territory we acquired, and that the numbers of our European force must rise in a definite proportion to our native army. To this Dundas replied that the true criterion was the relative power of our supposed enemies rather than the geographical extent of our own territories, and that no one has ever stated the necessary proportion of European to native troops as higher than one to four. He therefore rejected altogether the proposal for twenty-five regiments and considered that seventeen were adequate. As regards his own personal opinion, he would have agreed to the recommendation to disband the Company's European infantry, but he pointed out that expert military opinion considered it essential that the Company should maintain their own European infantry in order that from them non-commissioned officers should be drafted into their own native regiments. It was absolutely necessary to stiffen the sepoy army with these European non-commissioned officers ; the sergeants of the King's

regiments would decline to enter the Company's Indian army, and in any case their experience of Indian conditions, if gained only in royal regiments, would not have been long enough. "My present creed with regard to India," concluded Dundas, "is that nothing new is to be attempted without weighing well every rupee it will cost."¹

The scales at home were still further weighted against Wellesley by the appointment of Charles Grant, one of his ablest opponents, as Deputy Chairman of the Company in 1804, and as Chairman in 1805. Worse than that, the Ministers of the Crown who had so long supported the Governor-General against the Court of Directors, now began to distrust his statesmanship and dread the results of his further continuance in office. Even Castlereagh had found it more and more difficult to defend his policy as a whole, and had given him a hint that criticism was growing in volume. In September 1802, on the annexation of the Carnatic, he wrote that the government was prepared to give Lord Wellesley, "on the case as it stands explained in the papers already received," their decided support: "at the same time it is necessary that your Lordship should know that considerable doubts and difficulties have (existed) and do exist, in the minds of many persons in this country, which I trust, after further reflection and discussion will be removed. It is likely to make a prominent feature in the proceedings of the ensuing session, and no pains are spared, not only to impress the public mind with the harshness and injustice of the transaction in itself, but also coupling it with the cessions in Oudh, as also those in the neighbourhood of Surat . . . to prove that a systematic plan of territorial acquisition, inconsistent with the policy professed in the Act of 1793, has manifested itself in the late measures."² Castlereagh

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. v, Supplement, Miscellaneous, p. 171.

² *Idem*, vol. iii, p. 38.

could say for himself : " I look with confidence to the winding up of your government, being marked with as much solidity as its progress has been brilliant and commanding " ; ¹ but two months later he enlarged to Wellesley on his own difficulties : " Your Lordship is aware how difficult and delicate a task it is for the person who fills my situation (particularly when strong feelings have once been excited) to manage such a body as the Court of Directors, so as to shield the person in yours, from an unpleasant interference on their part." ²

In 1805 Lord Cornwallis reports Pitt as saying that Wellesley " had acted most imprudently and illegally and that he could not be suffered to remain in the government." ³ Arthur Wellesley, who had now returned to England, endeavoured to discover the reasons for this faltering and to counter any objections that ministers might make to his brother's policy. He visited both Pitt and Castlereagh and convinced himself that it was hopeless to resist the trend of feeling in England. He wrote out to his brother : " There is great danger of your being dismissed from office."

On receiving this message Wellesley resigned his post and sailed for England. His great proconsulship was over.

¹ Martin, *Wellesley's Despatches*, vol. iii, p. 41.

² *Idem*, p. 92.

³ Ross, *Correspondence of . . . Cornwallis*, vol. iii, p. 522.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL, THE COURT OF DIRECTORS AND THE BOARD OF CONTROL

THE growth and development of the constitutional question of the proper relations between the Governor-General, the Court of Directors and the Board of Control has either been strangely neglected by historians, or perversely misunderstood. It is generally assumed by admirers of Lord Wellesley that the Court of Directors were an ignorant, timorous and pedantic body of traders, who hampered, impeded and finally recalled their great servant, without gaining any conception of his work in India. The belated appreciation, which to many seems to take the form of a recantation, thirty years later, of the Court (then composed, of course, of different individuals) has done much to strengthen this impression. But the truth is more complicated and less one-sided than this. All the three parties concerned in the matter had a good deal of the right, and some of the wrong, on their side ; and the controversy was so interesting, and in many respects conducted in so reasonable a spirit, that it deserves a careful exposition.

The attitude of the protagonists in the dispute may perhaps be summarized thus. The Governor-General, as we have seen, being a man of iron will, clearly defined views and indomitable spirit, claimed to control the whole machine of the government of India. He was encouraged in this (though he wanted little encouragement) because, as we have seen, his colleagues willingly and wholeheartedly supported him. The Court of Directors refused

to acquiesce, nor is it reasonable to expect that they should have done so. After all, there was a constitution, which had been set up by the legislature, and the Directors supposed, and it is difficult to say they were wrong, that Parliament had intended that it should be maintained. Perhaps it ought always to be understood that constitutions, like the proverbial pie-crust, are only meant to be broken ; that they exist to confine and control the wayward and the weak among rulers ; and that, when the heaven-sent administrator appears, they should restrict him no more than the filmy strands of a cobweb. But the Directors could not take this view, nor, we may add, would any body of men in their position have done so. The Board of Control, as represented by Castlereagh, found themselves in a difficult position. The President, at any rate, had a very large measure of sympathy with Wellesley, and he definitely thought that the Court of Directors were attempting to exert a greater degree of control over the government of India than the framers of Pitt's Act had intended (though he admitted that the latter had not been explicit enough in their directions), but he could not deny that Wellesley had often ridden roughshod over constitutional principles, and had sometimes flatly and defiantly disobeyed orders, which the Directors were within their rights in giving. He wisely directed his energies to pouring, where he could, oil upon the troubled waters ; to removing anything provocative or insulting from the Directors' despatches ; and to assuming tactfully in the amended despatch, which the Directors were ordered to send to India, that Wellesley only required to have his attention called to irregularities to ensure promptly that they should not recur. But it must not be supposed for a moment that Castlereagh altered the main meaning of the Directors' famous despatch. It will be seen that in language all the more weighty, through its studied moderation and urbanity, he definitely allowed the Court to show

that the constitution had been, since Wellesley's accession, ignored and set aside, and on many points he transmitted to the Governor-General a direct prohibition of practices in which he had indulged. Finally, we may add that the letters passing between the Court and the Board of Control are creditable to both, and show how a controversy between two parties, neither of which surrenders its point of view, may be conducted with spirit, dignity and urbanity.

In the despatch, which the Court sent to the Board for their approval, known as Draft No. 128, they began by words of praise of the past : " On several occasions we have found ourselves called upon to bestow our warmest commendation on the measures of Marquis Wellesley ; and that we have embraced those occasions with pleasure, may be evinced by the testimonies given him of our approbation, which have not been exceeded by those conferred on the most illustrious of his predecessors. It has been with the sincerest regret that we have seen other proceedings of his Lordship, which it was impossible for us to contemplate with satisfaction. Our free opinions upon those measures have been long withheld, partly from reluctance to convey censure, and partly in the hope that single acts as they for a long time appeared of exceptionable nature would not occur again. We still retain all the consideration for the talents of Marquis Wellesley to which they are justly entitled, and are still willing to bestow our praise upon every measure of his government, which has been in our judgement calculated for the public good, but, after deliberately reviewing the course of his proceedings for some years past, there appears in it such a series of deviations from the constitution established by law for the government of India, and from the usages of our service, such frequent instances of disregard in affairs both of greater and inferior moment to all other authorities, and of continued assumptions of new authority by the Governor-General himself, that the character of our

Indian government has, in his hands, undergone an essential change. It has in fact been turned into a simple despotism ; the powers of the Supreme Government have been completely absorbed ; the subordinate governments have been reduced nearly to the condition of provinces of Bengal, the authority of the Court of Directors has in many instances been disregarded, and in some astonishingly insulted, even that of the Board of Control has been overlooked, informations of the most important and necessary kind have been withheld from this country, very great irregularities and defects have taken place in recording important transactions ; instead of that economy in public expenditure, which the spirit of the constitution of British India as well as the constant tenor of our instructions has enjoined, there has been in many instances a needless profusion, which has contributed to swell the Company's debt now increased to an enormous amount." ¹

With regard to foreign relations, though the law has expressly forbidden schemes of conquest and aggrandizement, " the spirit and intention of that salutary regulation have been signally violated, and the Company plunged deeper than ever in wars." ² These wars and all the political powers of the government connected with them have been directed by the personal authority of the Governor-General, and in a word his sole will and sole power have instituted all the most important measures internal and external . . . during the latter years of his government. It is impossible to pass over in silence the " numerous and alarming infractions of the constitution." ³ The Court then proceed to give details of such infractions. The practice of embarking upon a separate correspondence with the subordinate governments and authorizing them to withhold such correspondence from

¹ India Office, *Home Misc. Series*, 486, pp. 6-8.

² *Idem*, p. 10.

³ *Idem*, p. 11.

their councils was not warranted. "We have to remark in particular that no part of the correspondence carried on between him and Lord Clive in the years 1800 and 1801 relative to so important a subject as the future succession of the Carnatic . . . has yet been recorded."¹ They went on to chronicle a direct breach of their renewed orders on this point. In a letter of March 2, 1803, "we directed that the correspondence between our respective Indian governors unless under circumstances of a most peculiar nature (which can but seldom occur, and when they do, we ought to receive the earliest intimation thereof) should be carried on by the Governors in Council as formerly—but, to our very great surprise, we find by advices from that Presidency, that upon these orders being communicated by the Madras government to the Governor-General, he, without alleging any peculiar circumstance, or at all noticing the subject to us, directed that the separate correspondence should be continued without variation; thereby confirming a practice not only illegal in itself, but involving also a breach of the positive and recent orders of the Court of Directors."²

Wellesley had arrogated to himself powers which he had no right to exercise except through, and with the approval of, his Council. Instances were the appointment of Henry Wellesley to negotiate the treaty with Oudh and the extraordinary powers given to Lake and Wellesley in 1803. The authority of the Governor-General was "wholly incompetent to make such a delegation."³ Minutes from the Governor-General have been entered upon the Consultations at which he was not present. The orders given to Lake and Wellesley on April 16, 1804, to commence hostilities against Holkar could not legally be given by the Governor-General on his own authority :

¹ India Office, *Home Misc. Series*, 486, p. 14.

² *Idem*, pp. 15-16.

³ *Idem*, p. 19.

“equally illegal and irregular were the communication made of those orders to the Residents at the respective Durbars of Daulat Rao Sindhia and the Subahdar of the Deccan through the medium of the Governor-General’s private Secretary. The officer employed ought to have been the Public Secretary to the Governor-General in Council.”¹ The truth, of course, was that Wellesley’s relations with his Council were so cordial and close, that he had slipped into the habit of taking their assent for granted, knowing that it would be willingly yielded, and therefore that it was a waste of time to wait for it. The Court, in a way, saw this too, but to them it seemed only an aggravation of the offence, and that the Council were sharers in the guilt: “We cannot refrain from expressing our surprise that no attempt appears to have been made on the part of any of the members of the Council to check the Governor-General in the exercise of an independent authority, not warranted in law, by claiming to participate in virtue of their office.”² It was only during the Governor-General’s absence from Bengal that he was empowered to issue necessary orders to the other governments, and, when he was at Madras or Bombay, even that power ceased, for he was bound then to act in co-operation with the Councils there. His giving Colonel Murray the chief local military authority in Gujarat independent of the Bombay government was, “if not absolutely illegal, unquestionably contrary to usage and the constitution of the country.”³ The supremacy of the subordinate Presidencies over the military serving within their boundaries ought never to be questioned. Wellesley was curtly ordered to amend “the novel practice of addressing the public despatches to the Court of Directors in the singular number in the name of the Governor-General in

¹ India Office, *Home Misc. Series*, 486, p. 21.

² *Idem*, pp. 22-3.

³ *Idem*, p. 28.

Council.”¹ Before his time it was “not the practice of the Supreme Government to interfere, unless upon reference from the subordinate Presidencies, in the minute details of their affairs, much less to abridge them of any of the authority political or military with which the law had invested them.”² Then follows the passage already quoted in Chapter I : “It appears to have been the intention of Marquis Wellesley to concentrate all the political powers of British India in the person of the Governor-General and to consider the whole but as forming, in respect to him, one government through every part and ramification of which his authority was practically and constantly to pervade.”³

The Court went on to enumerate many instances of interference in the subordinate Presidencies, and summed up by saying : “Thus the principle of extending the controlling powers of the Supreme Government over all the details of the other Presidencies is not only directly avowed, but even a decent freedom of opinion on their part censured as a resistance of it. We are aware that it might be difficult and would be inexpedient to define by any exact line the limits beyond which the interference of the Supreme Government ought not in any case or circumstances to go, even in the internal affairs of the subordinate Presidencies, and we would be far from countenancing in them anything like a spirit of disobedience or resistance ; but we think it clear that the law did not intend the Supreme Government should assume the direction in detail of the business of the other governments as it does the direction of the divisions of country under the Bengal Government.”⁴

The Court then enumerate various instances of disobedience to their orders, some of them comparatively

¹ India Office, *Home Misc. Series*, 486, p. 30.

³ *Idem*, p. 34.

² *Idem*, pp. 32-3.

⁴ *Idem*, pp. 40-2.

trivial, though undoubtedly annoying and unjustifiable. Among the more important was "postponing the dissolution of the College established at Fort William (which dissolution the Court ordered to be immediate) to the distant period of eighteen months and with the express design of obtaining a reversal of the order for its deposition." ¹ In other matters the assent of the Court ought to have been sought, but was not, as "in ordering the permanent settlement of the revenues of the Fort St. George Presidency without any condition of rendering that permanency subject to the confirmation of the Court of Directors, or waiting for their determination upon that great measure. The grant of vast estates in perpetuity is one of the highest acts of sovereignty, and ought to emanate immediately from the sovereign power : and in so momentous a concern as that of fixing the land rents and tenures of a country for ever, where, too, such a principle was altogether new, and the real value of the lands in many cases very imperfectly known, the utmost caution and circumspection were required ; which considerations, with the example of the Bengal Government under Marquis Cornwallis in a similar case, ought to have produced an imitation of that example in a previous reference to this country, against which no necessity or expediency could be justly pleaded." ²

Reference was made in scathing terms to the expenditure on the new Government House—"a work of unexampled extent and magnificence and which was undertaken without any previous or regular communication to us of such a design, of its necessity or the scale of its expense." It was begun in June 1798 and carried on at enormous expense, yet the first intimation received was only in a letter dated April 2, 1801. The estimates were largely exceeded, and the total cost was over thirteen lacs

¹ India Office, *Home Misc. Series*, 486, p. 53.

² *Idem*, pp. 58-9.

of rupees, or £167,359 : “ Our being kept so long uninformed with respect to the expenditure of so large a sum . . . forms a striking contrast to information contained in your despatches from time to time respecting trifling expenditure, particularly in the 64th paragraph of your military letter of the 28th February 1803, by which we are acquainted that you had authorised the sum of (97) ninety-seven rupees, (13) thirteen annas to be disbursed.” ¹

When the Directors’ admonitions reach India, it is the custom for Wellesley to reply that he “ would address the Court separately on the subject,” ² but this promise is hardly ever fulfilled. This implies a deficiency of respect, “ and must in effect be considered as an evasion of the duty required from him.” ³ The Directors, therefore, record their “ determined resolution to resent any future instance of similar disobedience to the plain and positive orders of the Court of Directors, on the part of any of our servants, in an exemplary manner. We think it necessary at the same time to remind our servants in general, particularly such as are high in station, that, by the Act of 1793, ‘ the wilful disobeying or the wilfully omitting, forbearing or neglecting to execute the orders or instructions of the Court of Directors . . . by any Governor-General, Governors, President, Councillor or Commander in Chief . . . shall be deemed and taken to be a misdemeanour at law, and shall or may be proceeded against and punished as such by virtue of this Act.’ ” ⁴ “ It is not merely,” continued the Court, “ the authority of the Court of Directors that is contemned, but it is setting at naught the authority of the Board of Commissioners for the Affairs of India appointed by His Majesty in virtue of an Act of the legislature. . . . A wanton disobedience of orders so sanctioned,

¹ India Office, *Home Misc. Series*, 486, p. 61.

³ *Idem*, p. 67.

² *Idem*, p. 66.

⁴ *Idem*, pp. 69-70.

if permitted with impunity, might lead to consequences in our Indian empire the magnitude of which we cannot contemplate without experiencing a considerable degree of emotion.”¹

The Governor-General frequently absented himself from Council, and demanded on these occasions that the proceedings should afterwards be communicated to him for his approval. Between January and August 1801 he was absent from Council nine times ; between April 21 and December 13, twenty-eight times ; and between January 7 and August 18, 1803, twenty-four times. There was here, no doubt, a reasonable cause of complaint. The Act of 1786 had given the Governor-General the power in special cases to override his Council, it had not given him the power to dispense with it. “ The Governor-General,” said the Court, “ has not a right to assume to himself even in appearance the whole power of the government to the depression of the character of the Council ; neither have the Council any more right to abandon in appearance their part of the government.”²

It is interesting to know that in a plan for the improvement of the government of India which Wellesley had submitted to Dundas probably in 1799 the Governor-General had raised this point of the necessary attendance of the Governor-General at Council : “ Great inconvenience arises from no provision being made in the Act of Parliament for sittings in Council without the actual presence of the Governor or Governor-General, so that if the Governor happens to be indisposed or occupied by business of a more urgent nature, the current affairs of the government must be stopped until he is able to be personally present in Council.” He therefore proposed that in the absence of the Governor-General the Senior Member of Council should preside, but that if the

¹ India Office, *Home Misc. Series*, 486, pp. 70-1.

² *Idem*, pp. 75-6.

Governor-General were residing in the Presidency, no act should be valid, unless signed by him.¹

The Directors then turned to Wellesley's habit of what may be called exploiting the *fait accompli*, i.e. commencing political negotiations with Indian powers, without communicating his intentions either to his Council or to the Court, and failing to record the correspondence till such negotiations were concluded, or carried to a point where it was practically impossible to intervene or check them. Many examples were given, e.g. "It appears that no notice has been taken of the negotiation at Poona either by the Governor-General or the Governor-General in Council to the Court of Directors or the Secret Committee, from the 31 of August 1800 until the 24 December 1802, when the Governor-General advised the conclusion of the arrangement with the Peishwa. Under such circumstances of silence . . . and of withholding from the records all information which otherwise they might have afforded upon points of great political importance, the government at home is not only totally precluded from issuing any orders relative thereto, but is also thereby deprived of the exercise of its authority over the government in India on points so highly essential to the general interests of the empire as peace or war with the Indian powers."²

There followed detailed criticisms on the treatment of Indian powers, many of which have been already quoted, and a condemnation of the system of subsidiary alliance, and the despatch ends with the words: "The territories which we have lately acquired under Treaties . . . and by conquest, are of so vast and extensive a nature, and the engagements lately concluded with the several chiefs and Rajahs so complicated, that we cannot take a view of our situation, and of the political relations in which we now stand towards the various Indian powers, without being

¹ India Office, *Home Misc. Series*, 481, pp. 729-51.

² *Idem*, 486, p. 83.

seriously impressed with the wisdom and necessity of that solemn declaration of the legislature, 'that to pursue schemes of conquest and extension of dominion in India are measures repugnant to the wish, the honour and the policy of the nation.'"¹

This draft despatch evidently came upon the Board of Control as something of a shock. They felt that to the wider criticism of Lord Wellesley's system and to much of the language of the despatch they must take exception; but they also felt that the systematic violation of the Indian constitution could not be condoned. They therefore declared that they must defer taking the despatch into consideration till they received the documents on which it was founded. "But," they wrote, "the Board cannot postpone even for a time with reference to the concluding part of the draft which concerns the political system pursued for a course of years in India, expressing their dissent from the construction which the Court seem to put upon" the famous clause in the Act of 1793, "as well as from their reasoning on the application of this law to the transactions in question."² But they went on to show that in large measure, at any rate, they agreed with the Court of Directors: "Many of the instances adduced by the Court . . . to show that a departure from the established system of conducting the business abroad has latterly taken place, coupled with the protracted silence of the Supreme Government on the many important measures now in progress, appears to the Board to require an effectual interposition from hence for the purpose of restoring the business to those channels which are not only important to the due administration of the Company's affairs on the spot, but are indispensably necessary towards enabling the government at home effectually to control and direct the system of measures to be pursued abroad.

¹ India Office, *Home Misc. Series*, 486, pp. 153-4.

² *Idem*, p. 355.

This Board are fully impressed with the importance of maintaining this control at all times in its full vigour. The Councils of India must be made to reside in the government at home to the utmost extent which is compatible with the close efficiency and energy of the local government, which salutary purpose can alone be secured by the transactions of the respective governments being regularly carried on and daily recorded in Council and by the utmost attention being paid to the punctual transmission of their proceedings home by every possible opportunity.”¹

The Court promptly replied by forwarding a mass of documents to defend their strictures, and wrote : “ With respect to the letter itself, which is supported by these documents, we wrote it after much serious consideration under a deep sense of the importance of asserting and reverting to the principles of the constitution established by law for the government of British India.” They went on to add that they “ were happy to learn that your Right Honourable Board concur with us in thinking it necessary to recall the Government-General to the constitutional mode of transacting the public business, and take the liberty respectfully to express our opinion of the importance of transmitting orders to that effect as speedily as possible.”²

The Board did not reply till five months later. They then declared that the despatch seemed to them “ very injuriously and unjustly to reflect upon the British counsels in India for a series of years past.” The Board, however, “ concurring in opinion with the Court that an obvious departure has latterly taken place in the mode of conducting the public business abroad . . . have thought it expedient to recall the attention of the Company’s servants to the leading irregularities, which have occurred, in sufficient detail to guard against their repetition in future.

¹ India Office, *Home Misc. Series*, 486, pp. 356-7.

² *Idem*, p. 555.

But the Board in the mode of doing it are desirous of avoiding everything which might bear the appearance of general censure, and they feel assured from the terms in which the Court have expressed themselves with respect to Marquis Wellesley's services at the outset of the Draft, as well as upon many other occasions, that it cannot be their wish that such an impression should be created." They therefore cancelled the draft and drew up a despatch, as they were constitutionally empowered to do, "which they desire may be transmitted to India, and which in substance they apprehend will not be found to differ materially with respect to those points on which it treats, from the opinions which have been expressed by the Court of Directors."¹

The despatch of the Board, written of course as coming from the Court, differed from the Directors' draft by employing throughout the language of urbanity and admonition instead of truculence and prohibition. It assumed that its suggestions would be followed as soon as they were made. It omitted any general condemnation of the subsidiary alliance system and of the conquests and acquisitions of the past few years. It omitted the criticisms on the expenditure on Government House. But it made abundantly clear that the autocratic features of Lord Wellesley's rule were alien to the traditional system, and that a definite change must be made. "We have had occasion from time to time to point out, as they have occurred, particular instances of irregularity in the exercise of the powers of government at your Presidency. Upon an attentive reference, however, to the number and nature of these instances, more especially in the last two years, after making all due allowance (and certainly much is fairly claimable under the great accumulation of public business) for the irregularity incident to such a period, the

¹ India Office, *Home Misc. Series*, 486, pp. 556-7.

course pursued appears to us to bear so much the mark of systematic departure from the established regulations, and to have so strong a tendency, if passed over without remark, to alter fundamentally the nature of the government itself, as to render it an act of indispensable duty that we should seriously recall the attention of our servants to the principles and maxims upon which that government is by law established, and to point out to them the precise departure which has taken place in sufficient detail to guard against a repetition of similar irregularities in future.”¹

They then recapitulate the chief points of the constitution. The powers of the government except when the Governor-General is absent from his Presidency can only be exercised in Council : “ Measures ought to be decided on in Council and regularly recorded at the time, a regulation not more essential to the due administration of affairs on the spot, than indispensable towards enabling the government at home to trace and control the progress of measures carrying on. No relaxation in the above principles is known to, or recognized by, the law nor has any ever been countenanced by this Court.” The permission to carry on correspondence with the native powers in the name of the Governor-General only, “ is expressly qualified by the condition that the letters shall be previously approved in Council, and the answers read and recorded there when received. It is a recognition in fact, and not an abandonment, of the deliberative nature of the government, and is only to be considered as a conformity . . . to the habits and prejudices of the native powers.”² Again : “ It is the Supreme Government alone in the aggregate, and not the Governor-General personally, that has the superintending power over the subordinate Presidencies. . . . Any correspondence which may be carried on by the Governor-General in his individual capacity (except when

¹ India Office, *Home Misc. Series*, 486, pp. 560-1.

² *Idem*, pp. 562-3.

absent from Calcutta) must be considered as altogether private, and in no degree official, or to be brought upon the records as justifying or authorising any measure.”¹ In Bengal, instances in which government in Council has been departed from “are not subordinate and unimportant acts of mere detail, nor are they cases of peculiar emergency, in which the public service might by possibility have suffered from the delay of an order, but they are amongst the most important of the transactions in which the government has in later years been engaged, and of a nature not likely to suffer by the delay of being brought under the deliberation of Council.”² The despatch goes on to relate instances of matters never brought before Council. Amongst them is mentioned the fact that it was not till after the Treaty with Oudh had been ratified that the Council was told of the progress of negotiations or even that any negotiations were pending: “The instances above mentioned were certainly among the most important questions of Indian policy that have ever come under decision; and it cannot but be considered as a striking breach in the established system of the government that they should have been decided on without being regularly submitted to the consideration of the Council. And here we cannot avoid expressing our surprise that the other members of the Board should have thus submitted without remonstrance to a virtual exclusion from their official function.”³

“It would seem from the above,” they continue, “as if the Governor-General had considered his Council as a body to whom he might resort for advice, or not, at his discretion. It is impossible to maintain such a proposition, nor can the constitutional principle be satisfied by any other description of communication with those who

¹ India Office, *Home Misc. Series*, 486, p. 564.

² *Idem*, p. 565.

³ *Idem*, p. 568.

are joined with him in the government than the established deliberation which shall record the opinions and determination of the respective members of Council. Neither can the advantages of secrecy or despatch be pleaded in defence of such a mode of conducting the public business in opposition to the established rule of Law, and we are decidedly of opinion that in conducting the affairs of an extended empire, remote from the seat of government at home, power is best checked and controlled by the measures being brought into discussion before they are carried into execution, and that a discretion unqualified, even by the power of remonstrance, cannot with safety be entrusted to a single individual.”¹

The Board adopted almost verbatim the clauses reproaching the Governor-General's frequent absences from Council and the practice of not recording his diplomatic correspondence till it had accumulated for months. In regard to the former they add : “ We apprehend, except in case of illness, the Governor-General has never before been in the habit of absenting himself from Council,”² and in reference to the latter they describe it as a practice “ by which we are deprived of the means of understanding the real state of our affairs or of giving our directions till the opportunity of rendering them effectual is gone by. . . . Documents so voluminous in themselves . . . accumulated on the attention of Council in one or two sittings cannot be read or considered, and in fact they are calculated much more to embarrass than to inform those to whom they are submitted.”³ It is noticeable how, where possible, they soften, with a few words of appreciation or praise, the asperity of their reproof. Instead of frequent advices all intelligence has been held back till a course of transactions could be detailed with minuteness and

¹ India Office, *Home Misc. Series*, 486, p. 569.

² *Idem*, p. 570.

³ *Idem*, p. 571.

precision : " These reviews of occurrences have been executed with great ability and perspicacity and could not fail to prove most valuable documents to be possessed of in due time ; but they are unsuited to the immediate purposes of government, unless preceded by concise reports." ¹

After a clear intimation that positive orders from the Court are not in future to be disregarded, the despatch ends with words intended obviously to mollify ruffled feelings and encourage amendment : " We shall now close this letter under a full persuasion that the remarks we have made will restore the business hereafter to its proper channels, that it will be regularly conducted in Council and duly recorded at the time, and that the government, reserving its more extended statement of events till they can be prepared without interrupting the ordinary progress of business, will forward at short intervals concise reports of their leading proceedings to us overland." ²

But the Court refused to yield without a struggle. They held that upon all transactions of the government in India the opinion of the legal authority in this country ought to be expressed, for three reasons : first, the supremacy of the Home government must be upheld ; secondly, it is part of that system of publicity without which " not only would the reins of the government (of India) soon be lost to this country, but the consciousness would be extinguished by which every individual, holding any important station there, is now animated to laudable exertion, namely that he is acting upon a public theatre, that his proceedings will be publicly recorded there and publicly judged of here " ; ³ thirdly, if measures in India are passed in silence, the governments there may assume erroneously that they are approved—it is necessary that " upon every

¹ India Office, *Home Misc. Series*, 486, p. 573.

² *Idem*, pp. 575-6.

³ *Idem*, p. 580.

measure of importance specific opinions from home be given.”¹ Some think that the Home government should only have power to recall the Governor-General, but, “if this doctrine were fully followed up, the ruling power in England would have little else to do in the administration of India than to nominate and recall Governors, each of which during his continuance in office would thus be in effect absolute to the very great injury of the people. . . . Thus fell the Portuguese empire in India. . . . However true it may formerly have been, when our Councils abroad were composed of numerous members, that the power was too much divided to be energetic, things have been running lately in the contrary extreme. But our affairs will be everywhere best administered and the national character, of which a just liberty is the animating principle, will be best preserved from degenerating, by a due portion of the mixed government which we enjoy at home. Absolute power in one man is no more necessary in British India and will do no more good than in other countries. It may on extraordinary occasions bring into more rapid and vigorous operation the resources of the state, but is not likely to make it on the whole more secure or more happy.”² They denied any prejudice against Lord Wellesley: “No approbation could be more warm or cordial than the Court bestowed upon the early measures of his administration. . . . In the subsequent measures however of his Lordship’s administration, the Court perceived with pain various inroads upon the constitution established for the government of British India; and when they so far suppressed their feelings as, in the hope of his effecting great promised retrenchments in the public expenditure, to desire his continuance for another year in office, instead of answering their views, he embarked, unnecessarily, as they think, in those extensive plans of

¹ India Office, *Home Misc. Series*, 486, p. 581.

² *Idem*, pp. 583-4.

foreign policy inevitably leading to war, which, whatever power of political combination they discovered, and tho' followed up, as they have been, by very brilliant military exploits, have yet, in the opinion of the Court, been productive of many serious evils. . . . If these opinions shall be thought to result from the narrow views which some have been pleased, perhaps without sufficient proof or consideration, to ascribe to the Court, they are opinions held by very many of those persons best acquainted with the people and the affairs of India. . . . The Government-General has in Lord Wellesley's hands become very much a government of discretion, for he appears to have absorbed in his own person the powers of the Supreme Council and of the subordinate governments. . . ."¹

"It was impossible," they continued, "for the Court passively to acquiesce in such numerous infractions of that constitution as came successively before them. The practice of Lord Wellesley went to establish a new species of government and of power one of the tendencies of which was to exclude the Indian Company from the share they retained in the administration of that empire which their exertions had acquired. . . . Convinced as the Court are, that the part which the law has given to the Company in the political system of India, a part which invests them with little independent power, and no power capable of being dangerously misapplied, whilst in making them the organ and channel of this country for governing India, it makes them also an important check over the administration of Indian affairs—convinced that this department assigned to the Company is a most serviceable one for the public, the duty the Court owe to the nation as well as to their constituents will not permit them to see in silence a course of measures which tend to break it down, and least of all can they think it becoming, that the power and

¹ India Office, *Home Misc. Series*, 486, pp. 588-90.

influence which they have themselves conferred should be thus turned against the Company.”¹

The Directors went on to object to the way in which the Secret Committee established by Pitt's Act was employed to keep important news from the main body of the Court ; and finally dealt with the charge brought against themselves by the Board of having “ very injuriously and unjustly reflected upon the British councils in India for a series of years past.” To this charge they said : “ No obligation of duty nor sentiment of deference can require them to submit without evidence.”² They believe that this charge probably refers to the Court's opinions on the subsidiary treaties, the more so as in “ the irregular and unusual method of transacting the public business, under which are comprehended the frequent suppression of the powers of the Council and various other illegalities, the Court have the honour of being substantially in agreement with the Board.”³ Now on questions of policy, i.e. the subsidiary treaties, diversities of judgement are likely to arise, “ and the Court would have received with great respect the reasons which have led the Board to a conclusion concerning them different from that contained in the draft. But the Board decline entering into any discussion of the Treaties ; having, as they intimate, already sent secret orders to India relative to that of Bassein as well as the negotiations in Oudh. Unfurnished therefore, as the Court are, with the grounds of the censure the Board have been pleased to pass, they are left to a reconsideration of the material they possess, and the opinions they have delivered . . . after reflecting on the whole they are unable to discover how those opinions have merited the character ascribed to them, or to conceive any sufficient reason for departing from the tenor and substance of

¹ India Office, *Home Misc. Series*, 486, pp. 590-1.

² *Idem*, p. 597.

³ *Idem*, pp. 599-600.

them.”¹ They must beg leave to question whether it be perfectly consistent with the privilege, which they are supposed to possess, of free criticism “that the sentiments, which in the honest discharge of their duty they express upon great public acts of their Governors, should be stamped with the character of ‘injurious and unjust reflections.’” It was surprising that where the Court’s case is not really attacked, their opinions “should be censured in such decisive and comprehensive terms.”² They therefore press that censure should be passed, though now in a later despatch, on disobedience to orders, illegal appointments and profuse expenditure : “Never wishing to agitate any matters of controversy with the Board, they have proceeded to this step with great reluctance, and shall be sorry if in a single expression they have failed in that deference and respect which they are desirous of showing to the high department which they address and to the members who compose it.”³

To this letter, written with great controversial ability and indeed reasonable enough, granting the Directors’ point of view, the Board replied with the following note, which is a model of inflexible urbanity and the tact which makes no real concessions :

“ . . . The Board do not feel it necessary to advert in detail to certain arguments . . . with which they cannot coincide, and which have been relied on by the Court. There are, however, many sentiments contained therein in which they have the satisfaction entirely to concur, and in none do they join more sincerely and cordially than in the wish expressed by the Court that the best understanding should at all times prevail between the respective branches of the government at home.

“ Without having entertained the smallest intention to

¹ India Office, *Home Misc. Series*, 486, pp. 600-1.

² *Idem*, pp. 601-2.

³ *Idem*, p. 607.

discourage the Court from communicating to the Board at all times its unreserved sentiments upon the administration of the Company's affairs abroad, much less to censure what was no doubt considered by the Court an act of indispensable public duty, the Board are desirous of reassuring the Court that it would have been impossible for them to have given their consent to the draft in question being transmitted to India as the recorded act of the government at home, without making themselves parties to a very extensive condemnation of the political system of the Indian government for a series of years past, which, in their judgement, would have been unjust in itself, impolitic in its consequences and injurious to the national character both at home and abroad.

“It will always gratify the Board to enter dispassionately with the Court into the examination of measures, where such examination can take place without improper disclosures, or can tend to any practical good purpose, and if they have declined doing so on the present occasion, they trust the Court will be assured that it has by no means arisen from want of respect or from indifference to their confidence and regard, but from a conviction of the inutility, if not the impossibility, in a single despatch of treating satisfactorily and with precision such an extent and variety of matter as is necessarily connected with the several important political matters, on the discussion of which the Court has now for the first time entered, embracing (with other questions of less importance) the policy and propriety of our negotiations with the Court of Persia, with the Vizier of Oudh, with the Peishwa, the Subahdar of the Deccan, and generally the expediency and wisdom of all the subsidiary and defensive alliances which have been formed in latter years, more especially those which have been attended with any cession of territory to the Company.

“On such of these subjects as have appeared to them to require comment or observation the Board have already deemed it their duty to transmit their opinions to India, opinions which they have not felt themselves called upon by anything which has passed in the present discussion to alter or revise.”¹

¹ India Office, *Home Misc. Series*, 486, pp. 615-9.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE POLICY OF REVERSAL IN INDIA

THE account of Lord Wellesley's administration in India would be left singularly incomplete, were we not at least to attempt to answer the question how far his immediate successors were intended, and how far they were able, to reverse his policy. Cornwallis, now an old man and in ill-health, was hurried out to India. Undoubtedly he was expected, as far as he could, to put back the hands of the political clock. He was commissioned, as Thornton says, "to dispel, if possible, the remembrance of all the glories which had irradiated the brightest period of England's connection with India."¹ Castlereagh instructed the new Governor-General that the Home government "were well aware that the subsidiary treaties could not at present be done away, but that it was highly necessary to bring back things to the state which the legislature had prescribed"²—a reference to the clauses in the Acts of 1784 and 1793 prohibiting aggrandizement. With these views Cornwallis himself naturally agreed. His own former administration had been generally marked by a peaceful and non-interfering policy, and he could not perhaps recognize that a return to the *status quo* of 1798 was in any case impossible. It might be reasonable to urge that the war must be brought to an end, and even that peace must be made with Holkar on terms fairly favourable to that chieftain, but even to think of reversing the general trend of Lord Wellesley's imperial regime was a

¹ Thornton, *History of British India*, vol. iii, p. 551.

² Ross, *Correspondence of . . . Marquis Cornwallis*, vol. iii, p. 522.

conception born of panic and despair. Unfortunately, the efforts of Cornwallis and his successor Barlow gave the general impression, as Malcolm said, that Wellesley's measures had been condemned and that another system was to be pursued. So Lord Wellesley wrote in 1806 : " I find by my letters from India that Lord Cornwallis had commenced a systematic demolition of all my plans of policy." ¹ And John Malcolm, writing to his old chief, lamented that his counsel now went unheeded : " I do not think it probable any opinions of mine will ever be adopted in a manner that will be beneficial to the public interests. Every statement is favourably received and its truth and justice acknowledged—but it is first modelled with a view of reconciling its adoption to prior proceedings and next with that of suiting it to the palate of the Directors, and after undergoing this alteration it cannot be supposed to retain much of its original character. . . . The first result of this liberal policy will be to change a narrow and strong frontier which we at present possess for an extended and weak line. . . . We are denied the use of every means that can stimulate our allies to action." ²

The exact position when Cornwallis came out was that Holkar, though badly shattered, was not finally crushed ; Sindhia, hovering on the verge of treachery, was preventing the British Resident from leaving his camp, and Lake, the Commander-in-Chief, was preparing to act on the instructions he had received from Lord Wellesley before the latter's departure, to prepare for active operations against the confederate forces of Sindhia and Holkar, as soon as the season should admit. Cornwallis, on his arrival in July 1806, summed up the position by saying : " We are still at war with Holkar and we can hardly be said to

¹ *Historical Manuscripts Commission. MSS. of J. B. Fortescue, Esq.*, vol. vii, p. 348.

² British Museum. *Addit. MSS.* 37284, fols. 71-76.

be at peace with Sindhia ” ¹ ; and a little later he writes : “ We are now waging war against two chieftains who have neither territory nor army to lose. . . . I deprecate the effects of the almost universal frenzy, which has seized even some of the heads which I thought the soundest in the country, for conquest and victory.” ² Now it must be remembered that by the Act of 1786 Cornwallis exercised the powers both of Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief of all the forces in India. The result, of course, was that Lake now became his subordinate and in the natural course of his duty had to carry out Cornwallis’s plans. Those plans may be briefly summarized as follows. He desired to conciliate Sindhia by restoring to him Gwalior and Gohud, and relinquishing all territory west of the Jumna except Agra. He flirted with the idea of surrendering Delhi to Sindhia, and removing the Mogul Emperor to some post within British territory. He was even prepared to abandon the demand for the release of the British Resident improperly detained by Sindhia, “ as a mere point of honour.” He was determined not to renew the defensive alliance. Territories westward and southward of the Jumna were to be a debatable land constituting a neutral barrier between Sindhia’s possessions in Hindustan and our territories in the Doab. Probably these chieftains would be strong enough to resist the weakened Sindhia ; if not, interminable contests would ensue which would at least keep Sindhia’s forces employed.

This withdrawal of British protection from the Rajput chieftains, many of whom had rendered us notable service in the war, was vigorously criticized. “ A meaner course,” says Thornton, “ the lowest chronicles of ignorant depravity cannot exhibit—one more profligate the most

¹ Ross, *Correspondence of . . . Marquis Cornwallis*, vol. iii, p. 532.

² *Idem*, p. 541.

crooked diplomatist of the most unprincipled period of the world's existence never devised." ¹ A more modern historian adds that Cornwallis forgot or refused to see "that this policy would be paid for by the agony of millions of helpless peasants." ² Lake protested vehemently against the deep injury to the honour and reputation of the British nation, but before anything further could be done Cornwallis died on October 5.

Sir George Barlow, who succeeded, had been the right-hand man both of Sir John Shore and of Lord Wellesley, for he had the civil servant's characteristic virtue of being able to adapt himself to any policy dictated by his chief. Indeed, he had so well seconded the latter that he was supposed at home to be deeply tainted with the policy of acquisition and aggression. But he now showed himself eager to carry out and even to extend the policy of surrender. He associated himself with it whole-heartedly, and in adopting the plan of allowing the British Empire to profit by the slow destruction of its former allies he manifested, says Thornton, "a degree of moral hardihood commanding admiration, if from no other cause, at least from its extreme rarity." ³

Peace was finally made with Sindhia on November 23, 1805. The defensive alliance was not renewed; Gwalior and Gohud were restored; the Company were to claim nothing to the south of the Chambal between Kotah and Gohud, and Sindhia nothing to the north; finally, the Company pledged itself to enter into no treaties with the chieftains of Rajputana. In the meantime Lake had restored the military position. He had hunted Holkar, whose last campaign was, as Malcolm said, only a flight before the British army, northward to Amritsar. Holkar,

¹ Thornton, *History of British India*, vol. iv, p. 35.

² V. A. Smith, *Oxford History of India*. Oxford, 1923, p. 608.

³ Thornton, *History of British India*, vol. iv, p. 46.

in desperate straits, appealed to the Sikhs, but Lake's close and effective pursuit prevented the latter, even had they desired to do so, from accepting the fugitive's proposals. Holkar now sued for peace. He was defenceless and would have agreed to almost any terms, but Lake was forced by Barlow to conclude a treaty absurdly favourable to the defeated party. It was signed on January 7, 1806. Holkar renounced all claims to Tonk, Rampura, Bundi, places north of the Chambal, Kooch and Bundelkhand, but he received back the bulk of his dominions.

All the way through the negotiations Lake had fought, but fought in vain except in the case of the Rajas of Macheri and Bhartpur, for the retention of British protection over these minor chieftains, especially for the rulers of Jaipur and Bundi, to the last of whom our obligations were deep and lasting. "I am sick to death," wrote Lake, "of the present government all over India."¹ The worst and most unpardonable action of Barlow was that, not content with the two treaties, and fearing that they might be taken to imply a duty on the part of the Company to defend the Trans-Chambal states, he insisted on publishing Declaratory Articles which practically surrendered Tonk and Rampura to Holkar and withdrew British protection from the rest of the Rajput states. This was tantamount to inviting the Maratha chieftains to attack them—an invitation which they promptly accepted.

Two sayings of contemporaries aptly sum up this deplorable policy. Lord Metcalfe stigmatized it as "disgrace without recompence, treaties without security . . . peace without tranquillity."² And a native envoy of the betrayed Raja of Jaipur protested that "this was the first time since Great Britain had been established in India

¹ British Museum. *Addit. MSS.* 37284, fol. 79.

² [Sir] J. W. Kaye, *Life and Correspondence of Charles, Lord Metcalfe*. 2 vols. London, 1854, vol. i, p. 192.

that it had been known to make its faith subservient to its convenience.”¹

So far, it can only be held that Cornwallis and Barlow had largely succeeded in reversing Lord Wellesley's policy, but beyond that they were unable to go. Even Barlow recognized that as regards the greater measures he must stay his hand. He refused to modify the Treaty of Bassein, as the Court of Directors desired, and declined to dissolve the alliance with Hyderabad on the ground that “by such an event the very foundations of our power and ascendancy in the political scale in India would be subverted.”²

¹ Malcolm, *Political History of India*, vol. i, p. 373.

² *Idem.*, p. 377.

CHAPTER XXV

EPILOGUE

TO Lord Wellesley, on his return to England, it must have seemed that, however much the concluding years of his office had been dimmed and obscured by the only failures that had attended his whole career in India, the justice of his fellow-countrymen could not deny him the highest meed of praise for all that had gone before, and for his unending efforts since 1798 to increase, consolidate and maintain the Eastern empire. A bitter and cruel disappointment awaited him. It is not too much to say that under the stress and turmoil of the Napoleonic war the people of England were almost entirely unconscious of what had been going on in a world so remote from their purview and interest. The work of no statesman on so great a scale and over so long a period has ever been so grossly neglected and so unfairly disparaged by contemporaries as that of Wellesley. The masses were blind and ignorant ; the Court of Directors, though with some reason, as I have admitted, were hostile and alienated ; the ministers of the Crown, who knew best what he had done, were distracted by other cares and unwilling to incur any unpopularity on his behalf. It was a cruel nemesis of fate that Lord Wellesley, more than any other man, yearned for, and depended for his peace of mind upon, generous recognition of his achievements. He was not only most inadequately appreciated, but was essentially the kind of man to underrate even such appreciation as was granted him. Torrens has painted a graphic picture of his poor reception on his arrival in England, and has shown how, after the pomp and splendour of his life in the

East, the perfunctory and chilling nature of his welcome affected his spirits : “ There was . . . no lack of fuss and even of affection ; enough to content any ordinary general or envoy returning home. But he was neither. He had been playing King until the rarefied atmosphere of kingship had become so habitual that the murk of commonplace in the best room of the best inn in a half-lighted seaport town almost stifled him. . . . There he was, with wife and children, and two or three friends from town, after all his impersonation of paramount power and enjoyment of oriental magnificence, made much of by vulgar waiters just like any other Irish marquis on his travels. He did his best to look pleased and be gracious ; but his mortification was unspeakable ; and ere dinner was half over he broke out in expletives of impatience that made the circle stare. Hyacinthe, forgetting all that had changed their lot in life since the time when as a youthful and hardly known official he had sat at her feet adoringly, said with an unlucky laugh—‘ Ah, you must not think you are in India still where everybody ran to obey you. They mind nobody here.’ The disenchantment was complete. He rose early from table and withdrew, saying he was ill, and must be left alone ; nor could any subsequent explanation or expostulation mend the matter.” ¹

He was soon to learn that, so far from being welcomed as a conqueror, he was to be put on trial as a culprit. The long and sordid episode that followed can only be described as highly discreditable to all parties concerned in it. A certain James Paull, M.P. for Newtown, Isle of Wight, the son of a tailor, who had been engaged in commerce in Lucknow, had there fallen foul of Wellesley. He had been quite properly sent home by the latter, and now revenged himself by engineering an elaborate attack upon

¹ Torrens, *Wellesley*, pp. 300-1.

the ex-Governor-General in Parliament. Wellesley was subjected, in his own words, to a "species of persecution perhaps unparalleled in the modern history of England . . . a perpetual and indefinite state of accusation."¹ The dilatory proceedings were spread over two years without ever really coming to a head. Paull was half-supported by Fox and Francis (whose failure in the prosecution of Warren Hastings, if it had failed to impress upon them the need of charity, might at least have been expected to teach them a little more sense), by the Prince of Wales, Sir Francis Burdett, Cobbett and Horne Tooke. "All the proceedings," says Torrens with truth, "used in the case of Hastings were copied and parodied."² Fox and the more reputable members of the Whig party seem to have become after a time ashamed of the part they were playing, and tried uneasily to sever their connection with Paull and his dupes. But they had gratuitously tarred themselves with his brush and did not find it a simple matter to dissociate themselves. Paull lost his seat in 1806, but the charges were taken up by obscure members of the party such as Lord Folkestone and Sir William Turton. It was not till 1808 that the charges were voted upon and rejected and Wellesley's policy approved by large majorities. "My sufferings," wrote Wellesley, "have been much aggravated by the recent transactions in the House of Commons respecting India, which have left my honour and reputation 'to float and welter to the parching wind.'"³ The wretched Paull eventually lost all his money, became mentally deranged and committed suicide the same year.

There was never any real basis for Paull's charges, and it was monstrous that for these years they should be

¹ *Wellesley Papers*, vol. i, p. 235.

² Torrens, *Wellesley*, p. 305.

³ *Historical MSS. Commission. MSS. of J. B. Fortescue, Dropmore*, vol. ix, p. 212.

allowed to hang over him and eclipse his name. It is some consolation to find that a few brave isolated protests were made against this unworthy persecution. "Lord Wellesley," wrote a pamphleteer already quoted, "is reviled and insulted in every form of language and of publication, which the prostituted press and prostituted talents of his countrymen can invent. . . . We are rivaling the Grecian republics in their monstrous ingratitude and savage cruelty to the best and bravest of their heroes and statesmen." ¹ Wellesley, with his delicate sense of honour, refused to entertain any offers of office till his reputation was cleared. For this decision he has been criticized both at the time and since. Amongst his correspondence is an anonymous letter from "An Independent Englishman," which takes him to task for having refused, according to a prevalent report, a leading situation in the government: "I thought that Lord Wellesley's mind was superior to *mendax infamia*, and that the call of his King and Country would command his services. What, because a poor wretch thought proper to bring a charge against him, and some narrow-minded commercial men, from little motives of resentment as India Directors, supported it, can this affect such a man as Lord Wellesley? And cannot the enquiry be brought on in Parliament whether Lord Wellesley is in or out of the administration? Ought this to prevent the ablest man now in the kingdom, alas, Pitt is gone, from saving his country, at the moment when every energy and every nerve should be excited to save it? . . . Now the nation looks up to Lord Wellesley; he and Mr. Hastings were the ablest men who governed India; Lord Wellesley then proved his talents as a statesman, let him then take the station to which the King calls him and not let the nation be disappointed." ² With these senti-

¹ Britannicus, *A Letter to S. Whitbread* . . . , pp. 94-5.

² British Museum. *Addit. MSS.* 37416, fols. 102-3.

ments Torrens agrees, declaring that Wellesley's self-abnegation in regard to accepting office "was one of the greatest errors of his life, not merely because it filled his traducers with exultation, or because it chilled his friends with a vague sense of misgiving ; but because it was the desertion of duties ; he had no right to renounce office at the questioning of men whom in private he branded with every epithet of scorn."

For many years public opinion was grossly unfair to Lord Wellesley. It is typified in a remark made by Thomas Creevey in 1807, "The Marquis is a great calamity inflicted upon England," and in Croker's epigram of his "brilliant incapacity."¹ His work as ambassador, Foreign Secretary, and Lord-Lieutenant in Ireland, able and enlightened as it was, and though in the end it met with fairer appraisal and recognition, never seems to have convinced his contemporaries that he was a statesman of the first rank, nor indeed did these spheres of work afford him the unique scope for his peculiar abilities that he had found in India. It was not till the end of his life that any real appreciation of his greatest work came to him. Only in 1836, when the long-delayed publication of his Despatches at last revealed to his countrymen that during eight years of a world-wide conflict great imperial destinies had been swayed with matchless insight and vigour, did they recognize the long injustice of their blindness and ignorance. At last, too, the Court of Directors made handsome amends for their attitude in the past. They sent out to India copies of his Despatches for the instruction of members of the Civil Service in statecraft and administration ; they sent him the famous message that, "to the eventful and brilliant period of Your Lordship's government the Court now look

¹ *The Correspondence and Diaries of . . . J. W. Croker.* Ed. by L. J. Jennings. 3 vols. London, 1885, vol. ii, p. 77.

back with the feelings common to their countrymen"; they made him a gift of twenty thousand pounds sterling¹; and voted to set up in the India House a marble statue of the man their predecessors had so long thwarted and disliked.

In the debate at the India House it was freely acknowledged that the wisdom of Lord Wellesley's policy had been tested by time and proved by experience. "He has approached," said one of the speakers, "the common term of human existence, and this day is permitted to uplift the veil of time and to read the final judgement of his fellow-men." It had been suggested by some that the present was not the right time for the tribute to be paid, that it was either too early or too late. "I do not think so," said Sir Robert Campbell; "why withhold the laurel from the living brow, to plant it on the grave, where departed greatness sleeps unconscious alike of praise and censure?" These things were finely and justly said, and there is both pathos and dignity in the thankful acknowledgment on the part of the aged statesman of the recognition that had come, if over tardily, yet at last in not ungenerous measure. "In truth," he wrote to a friend, "they have awarded me an inestimable meed of honour, which has healed much deep sorrow and will render the close of a long public life not only tranquil and happy but bright and glorious." Among the manuscript records in the British Museum may be found Lord Wellesley's grateful and gracious letter to the Chairman of the East India Company. "The respectable authorities," he writes, "over which you so worthily preside, could not have conveyed to me the communication of their deliberate sentiments in a more kind or acceptable manner, nor by persons

¹ This was in addition to the £5000 annuity, voted to him by the Company in 1799 first for twenty years, and subsequently for life, on his declining to accept the £100,000 prize-money, which was his share of the plunder of Seringapatam.

more justly entitled to my high consideration and sincere esteem. On you I rely to render justice to the heartfelt emotions of respectful attachment with which I received this most gratifying communication. It is a considerable additional satisfaction that this signal act of liberality and justice on the part of the Court of Directors and of the General Court of Proprietors should have been so immediately confirmed by Her Majesty's Commissioners for the Affairs of India.

“ The final resolution of the General Court of Proprietors is dated on the 8th of November 1837 ; that day I must now deem the most auspicious of my long public life. On the 8th of November 1797 I embarked from England to assume the arduous trust of Governor-General.

“ During the course of my administration (which terminated in the month of July 1805) I had the happiness and honour of being distinguished by repeated proofs of the favour and generosity of the Company. But ultimately judgement was reserved on the general principles and result of that system of policy which I had pursued during the whole course of my government. This reservation (however honest, wise, just or necessary) was to me the cause of long, deep, and severe sorrow and pain.

“ Not the confidence and favour of three successive sovereigns. Not the dignity and power of various high official stations. Not the government of my native country [Ireland] twice entrusted to my hands could compensate in my mind the disfavour of that respectable authority under which my earliest and best services had been rendered to the empire. With equal wisdom, justice, and liberality, without any solicitation on my part, without any interference of influence of any description, casting away all passion, prejudice and error, the Company has relieved me from the heavy burden of grief, and the delay which had occasioned so much affliction now greatly

enhances the value of the ultimate decision. To such an extent have my days been prolonged, that I have seen my Indian administration tried by the unerring test of time, and subjected to the ordeal of a new age and of a new generation. After the lapse of thirty years, after all my principles, motives and views have been fully disclosed and all their results and consequences fully ascertained and proved, the Company has awarded to me a meed of fame, which gives to living honour all the weight and authority of a judgement of posterity.

“ Grateful for this unprecedented distinction, I prize it still more highly, as it affords a sure pledge that the great empire added to the British dominions under my administration will be governed in the same spirit by which it was acquired ; and that the same energy, by which our territories have been secured against the assaults of our enemies in War, will now be directed to cultivate the blessings of peace, and to establish our power on the solid foundation of the happiness and affection of a contented and flourishing people.” ¹

Few of the great controversies of history have had so right and gracious an ending, and however much we may make allowances for the stately language of compliment, there is plainly apparent in the words both of the Directors and their great servant a genuine warmth and an unmistakable sincerity. In the retrospective illumination thrown back upon the past by the onward march of thirty years each had learnt to understand better the position of the other.

Even at this distance of time it is permissible to regret that the government of the day did not supplement the action of the Directors by the grant of some honour from the Crown ; but it is pleasant to know that Wellesley's brothers and children showed themselves jealous of the

¹ British Museum. *Addit. MSS.* 37416, fols. 215-217.

honour and reputation of the head of their family. Lord Wellesley, indeed, though it may perhaps seem rather paradoxical to say so, was at his best in the relations of family life. Historians have perhaps been too apt to deduce that he was a man of profligate life from the fact that, as we have seen, he did not marry the mother of his five children till after they were born. But his connection with Hyacinthe Gabrielle Roland seems to have been looked upon at the time as equivalent to the regular morganatic marriage of a member of a royal family rather than as a discreditable liaison. There is every evidence that he was faithful to her till the time of their separation, and that he did not marry her simply because the social gulf between them was looked upon as too wide. There is no sign in the family correspondence that his mother resented it, or that the children ever thought of themselves as having a right to a grievance. Except that they bore no courtesy titles, they seem to have suffered no social disability, and both the daughters married into families of high position. The Wellesleys were a remarkably united clan, and the volumes of family correspondence in the British Museum show clearly that the great proconsul inspired the same love and loyalty in the home circle as he had done in the brilliant staff that surrounded him in India. The correspondence begins with the charming letters, written in childish round-hand and on ruled lines, by his boys and girls during his first years in India. They continue as the years go on and as the children pass through school and college to their womanhood and manhood. To them he was always the loved and honoured father and ready counsellor. One of the daughters, unhappily, made a shipwreck of her first marriage. The letters show how the rest of the family did all they could to save their father from the shock and grief of the scandal, to bring back the unfortunate girl to her first husband and, when that proved

impossible, procured a divorce and obliged her seducer to marry her. There are letters up to the end of her long life, pungent, racy and full of affection and gratitude, from Wellesley's mother. The only one of his brothers with whom Wellesley ever had any quarrel was the Duke of Wellington, and he stood curiously aloof from this united family circle. A study of this correspondence has convinced me of the general truth of reports about the Duke to be found in the Greville Diary: "The Duke . . . had no tenderness in his disposition, and never evinced much affection for any of his relations. His nature was hard." Again, "Lady Worcester told me to-day that the Duke is a very hard man; he takes no notice of any of his family; he never sees his mother, had only visited her two or three times in the last few years; and has not now been to see Lady Anne (i.e. his sister), though she has been in such affliction for the death of her only son, and he passes her door every time he goes to Strathfieldsaye."¹ This, we may say, was not the fault of the family, who obviously honoured and respected Wellington, and were perhaps a little afraid of him.

There was an especially beautiful friendship between Wellesley and Lord Maryborough, who showed in every way a sedulous and loving care for his elder brother. To him Wellesley entrusted all his affairs when he sailed for India: "I rely entirely upon your judgement, diligence and honour . . . and I commit the whole of my affairs and all the dearest interests of my heart into your hands with the most implicit confidence and the most perfect tranquillity of mind."² Maryborough exerted himself in a way that does him infinite credit to heal the breach that had one time existed between Wellesley and the Duke of

¹ P. W. Wilson, *The Greville Diary*. 2 vols. London, 1927, vol. i, pp. 173-5.

² British Museum. *Addit. MSS.* 37416, fol. 9.

Wellington. "I was delighted," he wrote, in May 1838, at receiving your note. Nothing could give me greater pleasure than to hear that you and Arthur had renewed the affectionate intercourse which had subsisted for so many years, and which from my heart I pray may continue for the remainder of your lives."¹ A year later he writes from Deal giving a description of the great banquet there given to the Duke, at which one thousand seven hundred and fifty people were present: "Brougham's speech was one of the best he ever made; and I was particularly pleased with it as his character of you was most beautiful and was as true as it was beautiful!! He really did you justice and the wonderful applause, with which all he said of you was received by all parts of the great assembly he addressed, gladdened my heart."² Again he writes, in 1840: "Arthur . . . always whenever I converse with him talks of you with the greatest affection."³ Above all, Maryborough was anxious that his brother, having at the end of his life won a position above the storms of controversy, should not endanger it by entering once again into the party arena. In 1842 Wellesley wrote an article attacking severely the old enemies of his friend Pitt, and sent it to Maryborough for his opinion. The latter praised its talent, force and energy, but deprecated publication. If it appeared, "I very much fear you would have attacks upon you from all quarters—from newspapers, reviews, reformers, radicals, political writers, etc. etc., and the tranquil glory which you now enjoy from all parties and all descriptions of the public—in short one may say from all mankind—would be interrupted and embittered. . . . Your station is most glorious. You have, as you have yourself said, lived to know and, one may say, to receive the admiration and approbation of posterity. The

¹ British Museum. *Addit. MSS.* 37416, fol. 226.

² *Idem*, fol. 231.

³ *Idem*, fol. 241.

proceedings of the East India Company . . . established, I should rather say confirmed, your character as one of the greatest, most upright and most accomplished statesmen that has appeared in ancient or modern times. You have lived to overthrow and disarm every public enemy your long public life naturally created, and you have closed your public life with the general admiration of every description of public man in the empire and with the universal testimony of all the people to your transcendent ability and integrity. You are looked up to and admired for the calm dignity with which you conduct your retirement. . . . Let me then, as you desire me to give you my opinion of your paper, beg of you to consider well whether it is desirable for you to publish this most able, but you must allow bitter and severe attack upon the Whigs and Northites. . . . Consider whether such a publication would not be thought an uncalled-for attack upon numerous departed statesmen held in high estimation by very large bodies of the nation, and that from a great authority enjoying repose, unbounded reputation, universal respect and love, and by none more venerated and appreciated than by the descendants and followers of the very parties he arraigns.”¹

It is not less creditable to Wellesley that he could accept this noble advice in the spirit in which it was tendered. He thanked his brother for “his very able and most kind, affectionate and judicious letter.” “I certainly should,” he continues, “injure my own character and with it the memory of my exalted friend Pitt by any intemperate and superfluous attack on his miserable and now almost forgotten enemies. The fate which they have already met is perhaps the best for them and the world—utter oblivion. . . . So let them all sleep together in dumb eternal forgetfulness, the proper tomb of such characters ! But my

¹ British Museum. *Addit. MSS.* 37416, fols. 283-5.

affection and respect for you will live in full vigour and . . . freshness as long as one spark of life remains to me. I adopt your advice with gratitude . . . and I shall follow it implicitly with a true sense of its wisdom and sound judgement.”¹

The remarkable affection of his brothers for Lord Wellesley, while it reflects honour upon them, testifies to the possession on his side of winning qualities and an unselfishness that does not always accompany greatness. His death evoked tributes from all his relations of far more than conventional regret. “Although,” wrote Lord Maryborough, “we can never cease to lament his loss, yet we must feel that providence was most kind to him, in blessing him with a very long life, and conferring upon him honours, reputation and splendid services beyond almost any person of the present or indeed I may say of any age. He has left behind him an imperishable fame and his writings and his character will shine as long as English history or the English language shall remain.”² “I can only say,” wrote his youngest brother, Lord Cowley, “that I have lost the best and kindest friend and the most affectionate brother that man ever had.”³

There, perhaps, in this last sunset gleam of public recognition and family love it is best to leave Lord Wellesley, remembering and judging him by what is the fairest source of recollection and the justest criterion of appraisement—all that was highest and noblest in his composition. And indeed, making full allowance for anything that was harsh or inconsiderate in his public career—I have not in this memoir disguised these traits—and for all that was trivial, petty, affected, or even effeminate, in his private life, I must record my deliberate conviction that he was an administrator and ruler of wonderful

¹ British Museum. *Addit. MSS.* 37416, fol. 286.

² *Idem*, 37316, fol. 164.

³ *Idem*, fol. 182.

achievement and glorious capacity. This verdict, which may seem to some excessively laudatory, is based on two main considerations : First, the practically unanimous testimony of all those who were brought into close personal contact with him, men whose private ambitions and natural rivalry might well have led them, had they had the least excuse for doing so, to hint that some of the credit belonged to themselves. Secondly, the fact that few historical characters, in the writer's judgement, lose less and gain more when their work is examined at close quarters. In his case, as in no other, the nearer view enhances, it does not impair, the promise of the distant prospect. It so often happens—we must all have experienced this—that much of the glamour of a great reputation fades when we unweave the close-knit web that was woven on the loom of time, and survey month by month and week by week the work and life on which it was based ; when we see how often the subject of our quest—one perhaps who has held our long allegiance—hesitated and floundered ; how often he obtained credit for other men's work ; how he “ became great by bestriding great movements ” ; how often he was not really resolute, as we had thought, but vacillating ; not self-guided, but hounded on by circumstances ; not gifted with divine prevision, but swayed to doubting decisions by the innumerable accidents of chance or the cross-currents of barely conscious aims. But Wellesley's fame seems to rise triumphant above the deadening contact with detail, circumstance, and environment. He, if any man ever did, knew the motive-springs of his own soul and fashioned his own purpose. That purpose appears all the more, and not the less, his own, as we trace it day by day and see it growing in breadth and content. He welcomed and shouldered responsibility when smaller men shrank from, and disclaimed, it. It is better for the statesman to be sometimes

wrong than always indecisive. If Wellesley on occasion erred, he erred boldly and openly, not striving to hide his proceedings from men's eyes, or to attain his ends by devious means, but ready to defend and justify them at the bar of the world's judgement. And so it was perhaps fitting that his fame, so long obscured, should finally have been raised to a secure pre-eminence upon the pedestal of his own *Despatches*—upon five volumes of state papers published thirty years after the facts with which they dealt had occurred—for, though they may appear at times ponderous and turgid, they are massively impressive in their power, their logical force and their tone of resolute decision ; they at once unfold the detailed texture of his policy and enable us to see, with a wealth of circumstance, how wide was his knowledge, how luminous his vision, how self-shaped his aims, how intrepid his spirit. They burst upon that generation like a thunder-clap of revelation. His countrymen knew at last that, in his own peculiar sphere of work and in his destined hour, a great ruler of men had walked in their midst.

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